

FTBC

GROWTH TRACKS


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Welcome to Growth Tracks which is FBC's program designed to set the disciple on the firm foundation spiritual maturity.


In 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) Paul writes "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

The key to growth in our spiritual lives is encountering the glory of God through the person of His Son who is His perfect image. The more our hearts are filled with the knowledge of Him the more our characters are moulded, the more our hearts are filled with His love and more our lives will be directed towards the purpose for which we were created....to glorify Him. Each chapter is designed to provide a progressive track to show the face of Christ through selected but key passages in the Bible laying down the bed rock foundations of faith that will form the basis for a life -long learning and growing in to the likeness of Christ. Prayerfully follow these chapters and His Spirit will propel you into a trajectory of robust growth and spiritual transformation. Learn how to read the bible by tackling whole passages of Scripture rather than piece meal verses. See how principles from the passages will be translated to everyday life. For those disciples going into the Gamma program these presentations will help bridge the gap between the Alpha Beta programs and the more in- depth Gamma discipleship program.

For those who prefer to listen and see the contents of this book you can go to our website at [www.fbc.com .my](http://www.fbc.com.my) and each chapter will be presented in a series of slides at the resources section of our site under the title "Growth Tracks"



MODULE 4



HOW TO BE BORN AGAIN

In this presentation, we will be looking at the concept of being born again from the passages John 3:1-15 and Ephesians 2:1-3. We now start off in a segment of the Gospel of John where Jesus deals with individuals.

- In chapter 4, he ministers with the Samaritan woman.
- In second part of chapter 4, a Gentile ruler.
- In chapter 5, a man who is invalid at the pool.
- In this early part of chapter 3, Jesus deals with Nicodemus, a Pharisee leader.

There are three topics that we need to deal with in this particular section:

Why must we be born again?

What does being born again mean?

How can we be born again?

A. Why must we be born again?

John 3:1-3 (ESV) Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The issue arises, when this gentleman sees Jesus. He wants to talk to Jesus because he recognized Jesus has been performing miracles. He has recognized this by saying, no one can do these signs unless there was something special about him or God's hand was on him. He recognized that these miracles could only come from God, so this was a religious man. So he came to discuss theological issues with Jesus. However, before he could even start the conversation, Jesus tells him that unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Which means this man thought he was already in the kingdom of God. He thought that of all people in Israel that he would be the one most likely to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus is telling him, hey! unless you are born again you cannot even encounter God, which is a bit of a shock for him.

So we need to look at some of the background to this conversation in order to understand scripture and what Jesus is trying to tell this gentleman. Part of Jesus message is based on who Nicodemus was. Now if you look first

John 3:1-3 (ESV) Now there was a man of the Pharisees

Who are the Pharisees?

Pharisees were a select group of men who are set apart to live holy lives for God. There were only about 7000 of them in the whole nation of Israel and they were like holy people in a sense that they had been set apart to study God's word devote their lives to Him. This gentleman's name was Nicodemus and you will notice he was not just one of the select 7000, he was more than that. He was the ruler of the Jews, which means he belongs to the Sanhedrin, which is a council of 70 religious and political Jews who actually rule the nation in terms of religious life. The Romans control much of the political life, but the religious life was actually controlled by this council of Sanhedrin of Jews and Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, which means he was part of this committee. Hence, he was a prominent politician. Not only that, if you look further down and look at verse 10, and Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel?". So this means, he was not only a Pharisee, he was also a politician, very high ranking Jew and also "The Professor of Israel", which meant he knew the Mosaic Law. He knew his bible back to front. He of all people would have some knowledge that would get him close to God. This is a kind of person who comes to Jesus.

Here is the irony, here is a man who is the top politician, belongs to that elite 7000 number of Pharisees who has been studying God's word, in fact he is a professor of the Bible as it were and Jesus turns and tells him, look you can't even see the kingdom of God, much less enter the kingdom of God. Why? Unless you are born again, which brings in this whole issue of needing to be born again.

So to understand, why Nicodemus has to be born again, we need to turn to Paul's letter to the Ephesians 2:1-3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Paul is telling the Ephesian church, before they became Christians they were actually dead in their trespasses due to sin. This is the same condition which Nicodemus was found in. He came to Jesus, thinking he was alive, he was very-very much qualified to enter the kingdom of God, but Jesus is telling him, he is dead. He needs to be born again.

To help us understand this concept of being spiritually dead, let's take an example from the medical field where people who are kept alive by technology. We have got respirators that provide breathing for a person who have got medications to keep up their blood pressure and we could keep a person alive for a fairly long period of time.

The presence of these machines somehow confuse and blur the distinction between death and life. You can be awake and aware, which is basically someone who is alive and functional like you and me reading this article, but there is a situation when a person is awake but unaware, a vegetative state where he is awake technically but unaware. He can't remember who you are, he can't speak to you, he is in a world of his own. We call this the vegetative state because of severe brain damage. The person is alive but he is just not aware. The last situation is basically brain dead. The patient can be unawake, which means he is unconscious and he is unaware and he is actually brain dead but kept alive by machines and the question is, how do we know when a person is actually brain dead, so that we could actually switch off the machines that are artificially keeping him alive.

Medical doctors will conduct several test and the test are to determine several criteria, which would then indicate that his brain has died off. These people would not be aware, nor awake, they would be not responsive to any reflexes, which means if we prod and poke them and produce some pain to force a reflex and there is no response to pain at all. They are not able to breathe, all the reflexes are gone and in a case like this they are kept alive with machines but they will expire. They cannot live very long, the pacemaker cells work for about a week, they cannot work the lungs. The machines work for them, they can't control the blood pressure and their hormones, we do all that work for them. Eventually, after sometime they will actually die. Death comes within a week, despite the machines because these people are brain dead and the important thing of identifying brain death is that it allows doctors to be able to harvest organs from people who are actually artificially kept alive by these machines.

So here we have a similar concept, you have got someone who is brain dead but still kept alive by machines and within a week or so they will be undergoing physical death, but meanwhile kept alive artificially, they are nonresponsive, they have no reflexes. Same thing with spiritual death. We are actually spiritually dead but it takes us 70 years to actually physically die for all eternity.

What is spiritual death?

It is like physical brain death. We are nonresponsive to spiritual values. We have no ability to do so, we have no insight over our own death. So as far as our response to whether God exist, we will deny it. Whatever God wants us to do, we rebel and do the opposite. We have no inclination or desire to obey him and we have no inclination or even insight to the fact that we are spiritually dead. That's what spiritual death is that applied to Nicodemus. Now Nicodemus thought, he was a spiritual elite. He was part of the 7000 special Pharisees; in fact, he was their leader. He was the professor of theology, he knew everything about God, but there is a difference between knowing everything about God and actually being spiritually alive and having a relationship with God and really knowing Him personally. He was nonresponsive to what God actually wanted him to do in his life. He was under the illusion that he knew God.

Paul describes what spiritual death is. You are nonresponsive to God when you are spiritually dead, which means we are following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is at work in the sons of disobedience. That describes the devil. It is Satan that we are following. We are disobedient to God. We cannot obey, because we are not responsive to God.

3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.

Here we are living according to our instincts, according to our own selfish ambitions, carrying out whatever is pleasing ourselves and being the king of our own lives and by nature children of wrath. Hence doing what comes naturally, like the cliché term following our heart means not following God because by nature our default mode is not following God. As His creation we are naturally and by design and purpose accountable to God and as a result of our non-responsiveness to God who is our creator, we incur his wrath and punishment as the rest of mankind. So that's what spiritual death is.

It would be useful to describe spiritual life as the fourth order of life in this world. Imagine having a beautiful concert and seated at the hall is an apple, a chimpanzee and two human beings. If you were an apple sitting in a hall, you would not be able to hear the music of the symphony being played. The apple plant would be responsive to the light, it grows towards the light and have photosynthesis but it feels no pain, is not happy with the music, it is never hungry, has no fear, has no concept of what music is. That's what plant life is. It is not very aware and it cannot take in much of the reality of its environment.

An animal or chimpanzee sitting at the concert hall will be able to take in a greater awareness of reality. Why? Because it has got more senses. It can hear, respond to the light, feel the music, the mood of the music. It has got the rest of the feelings like hunger, fear, but it is not aware of the beauty of the music. It doesn't understand the concept of right or wrong or justice, so it is jumping all over the place. It doesn't behave. That's what animal life is.

The third order of life is human life. Human life is the rest of us sitting and listening to the music. We are impressed by the esthetics, we are impressed by the beauty and majesty of the music. Music may tell us the story of love, of justice and we can appreciate that. We can make plans to come back to the concert tomorrow. We have ambitions, we have feelings, so therefore we are able to take in much more of the reality that the world has got to give us.

The fourth order of life is actually spiritual life. On top of everything that the human person does, a person who is spiritually alive or born again will have on top of all those things described before an awareness of God, an awareness the existence of God, of being created by God and an awareness that God loves us and we need to reciprocate by love towards Him and if we disobey him there is a feeling of guilt and accountability to God. Those are spiritually alive people. Someone who is spiritually alive would be spiritually aware of God, whereas a person who is not aware is spiritually dead. As far as spiritual values are concerned, he will be uninterested. Take him to church for example and even the most riveting and best expounded sermon would be boring, look at the Bible study, it will be uninteresting. Why? Because he is not really responsive to real spiritual issues in his sight because he is spiritually dead.

Nicodemus was filled with all sorts of head knowledge and theology but in his heart, there was no real awareness of accountability to God, desire for God and deep inadequacy because of sin in his life and in that situation, he was spiritually dead.

This brings us with answer to the question, why must we be born again. It is because we are spiritually dead and it is not knowledge that would bring us to God, it is not our riches that would bring us to God, it is not position in the society that would bring us to God. We are going to look at what does it mean to be born again.

B. What does being born again mean?

Let's look back at our passage and look at this issue, how we are to be born again. In verse 4,

4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Nicodemus completely misunderstands Jesus and he is thinking on the level of human life and the third order of life. When Jesus says, you need to be born again, Nicodemus thought that he had to climb back into my mother's womb and be born again. That's not what Jesus means. Jesus says

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

So Jesus is saying, look you are talking about getting back into your mother's womb and being born again, that's physical. What I am talking about isn't physical, it is a spiritual makeover. It is spirit. Now how can you do this?

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

So the clue about how we are going to be born again, one must be born of water and the spirit. An average guy like us and the rest of us reading Bible have no idea of what Jesus is talking about because we are not aware of the history behind this passage. Nicodemus would be aware because Nicodemus is a teacher of Israel. He is the Professor of theology. When Jesus mentions the word, born of water and the spirit, immediately Nicodemus will remember the Old Testament Bible of which he is a teacher and he could have easily referred back to that.

Nicodemus should have remembered 500 years earlier there was a prophesy of Ezekiel, around BC 593-571 Israel was in exile and during that time it was Ezekiel's prophesy which had a mention of these elements. Jerusalem fell at about 593 BC, 500 years beforehand and the Babylonians conquered the city. The people were taken into exile forcibly and resettled all the way in Babylon and they were in a terrible state. Homesick, alone and suffering and the

reason why God allowed that to happen was because they become idol worshippers and abandon their worship of the true God, and it would seem as if this was a time when that even though they were the chosen people that they were abandoned by God and they would die in a foreign land. It is in that context where God intervenes and God sends a message through his prophet, Ezekiel, telling them that they would not be in exile forever. There will be coming a day where God will intervene on their behalf.

The coming intervention of God was prophesized by Ezekiel

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (ESV) I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

So this is the reason why the people of Israel or Judah had gone into exile, defeated by the Babylonians, were moved in exile to live forever in Babylon because of their rebellion against God, because of the idols they worship instead of the true God.

26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

So what God is saying to them, that in the future I will sprinkle clean water on you, you will be clean from your uncleanliness and from all your idols I will forgive you, which means God will come and forgive their sins. The sprinkling of the water and cleansing is basically metaphorical. It is like as if you are cleaning dirt off. God is going to clean their sins. God is going to forgive their sins. **Now how He is going to do that?**

I am going to give you a new heart, a new spirit I am going to put inside you.

So it is not something theoretical. It has got to be something inside. They are going to have a new heart. I am not talking about a heart transplant, we are talking about a new way of looking at things. A new spirit or nature within them.

I will put my spirit

Which means God's spirit himself will be inserted into their hearts.

What will this spirit do?

This spirit will cause them to walk in my statutes and obey my rules, which means the Holy Spirit will come into their lives and will so open their spiritual eyes that they will be able to want to follow God and able to follow God and love God in return. There will be a spiritual reawakening. They would have a new nature. The new nature will be different. If you were to present a lion with the choice of a bowl of salad or some ribs, nature will dictate that he would obviously choose the ribs, he will never choose the salad, because that is how he is made, it is his carnivorous nature. Give a rabbit the same choice and he will choose the salad instead. Confronted a child with the choice of an apple or a cake and most likely he is going to grab the cake, that's how he is made.

Confront a human being, and given the two choices of serving God or using God. Most of us will choose, I want to use God instead of serve God. The reason why most people are religious is because they are willing to give

something to God in order to get something back in return. They are not serving God they are using God. That's human nature.

Paul describes this back in our Ephesian passage that we are spiritually dead because we were following Satan and we were living according to the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. Now we have to understand, when Paul writes flesh.

What does flesh mean?

Flesh does not mean our physical muscles that hang off our bones. The theological meaning of flesh, it is the aspect of our lives that wants to be God. The aspect of our lives that does not want to be ruled by anyone else. So therefore we will carry out the desires of our body and mind, but the focus is pleasing ourselves, not God.

What is flesh?

We have natural desires. We have normal desires given to us by God. We want food, comfort, sex, we want to be competent in our work, we want love and affection and power. These are normal desires but they can be either used to honor God or they can be used as strategies of a life lived without God. We can seek for comfort, we can seek for satisfaction and sex, we can seek to be competent in our work or we can seek love and affection or we seek power, all to please ourselves or we could focus all these desires in order to please God. So therefore, the problem with spiritual death is that we are unaware of God and we do the things that we normally do in order to live a life without God which is how a spiritually dead person lives.

Here is an example of a movie star, Letitia Wright, who actually wrote these words,

"I was going through a lot, a very difficult time in my life and I just needed to take a break from acting because I really idolized it. So I came off from it and I went on a journey to discover God and my relationship with God and I became a Christian. It really just gave me so much love and light within myself. I felt secure and I felt like I didn't need validation from anyone else or from getting a part. My happiness wasn't dependent on that; it was dependent on my relationship with God."

Here you can see that this actress used to idolize acting. The fact that she got great juicy roles and was paid a lot of money, build up her self-esteem and she used that as her idol. It was normal and natural to want to be famous, to want to be rich, to want to be successful, that's normal human desires but she used these desires in order to please herself and to basically live a life without God and it didn't bring very much pleasure to her or satisfaction in the end. So she came off that and she went on a journey and somehow she became born again, because later on she can write that "my happiness wasn't dependent on acting anymore. It was dependent on my relationship with God". Suddenly, she was spiritually born again. She could finally see those things which she could not see before.

So a lot of people, even in church, are basically wolves in sheep's clothing. They clothe themselves with this veneer of religiosity, but actually in their hearts they are living to please themselves. They are proud of their achievements. They are like Nicodemus, moral, hardworking, full of integrity and good works. They are very defensive when you try to criticize them and they look down on others. They tend to gossip or criticize because they believe others are not good enough, they are not hardworking enough, they are not successful enough. People like this use their self-achievement as a method of self-esteem because it is a religious way of subconsciously avoiding God.

The irony is that the very “good” person who is chaste and honest and morally upright can be exactly in the same boat in the eyes of God as the immoral person who thumbs his nose at God and does whatever he wants. The former is spiritually dead and uses morality or chastity for self-esteem, to try to save himself, because by being very moral, he thinks that he can be his own God. The immoral prostitute on the other hand uses sex to be independent of God. They are both in the same boat, they are both spiritually lost.

So let’s get back to our passage in John and we need to look at this, because we are spiritually dead we need to be born again and Jesus said to them

John 3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”

Here it is an unpredictable process. You can’t control it. The spiritual nature is not under our control. Here Jesus is using a wind metaphor. When you are standing out on the top of the hill, the wind blows where it wishes, you can’t control the wind, you can hear it. You can see its effects, but you don’t know where it comes from and where it is going to go. It is going to turn and twist and roll. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. So the wind metaphor tells us that the spiritual process is not under our control, it is actually under God’s control, it is spiritual. This is where Nicodemus and many of us get it very wrong. We believe it is us that makes the fateful decision to believe in Jesus and then the Spirit comes into our hearts to make us Christians. Spiritually dead people are like physically dead people they cannot on their own make any contribution towards being born again just like a baby contributes nothing towards this own birth. The time comes and the uterus contracts and the baby is thrust out into the brave new world. The baby can make no signal nor make no movement towards the exit to compel his own birth. The baby is helpless till the birth this is why Jesus is using the birth metaphor and applying it to the spiritual rebirth process to emphasize our helplessness and His divine initiative. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives and regenerates us makes us born again. We don’t decide to be born again. The moment the Spirit regenerates us and we become spiritually alive we begin to be aware of God of His existence of our need for Him we begin to realise that we have sinned and we being to see the need to turn to Him.

C. How can we be born again?

In a sense this is an impossibility because being born again is something organized by God’s Spirit we cannot wake up one morning and decide we believe in God and be born again. When He decides and puts His spirit in us we are born again. We can’t control it. We can’t see the spirit, we can’t see God, we don’t know how He works. However, the born again process on the part of how we react in response to the Spirit working in us can be seen. This is the challenge to Nicodemus.

The answer lies in the next few verses

John 3:14-16 (ESV) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

So this is a crucial passage, but the crucial passage is a little bit difficult to understand for us in modern Malaysia, because Jesus is using again an example straight out of the Old Testament. We need understand the example from the Old Testament to better understand what it means to be born again. The reason why Jesus using this example

from Old Testament is because Nicodemus is an Old Testament professor. So therefore he goes back to an episode that happened in Israel's history many-many years ago.

Jesus is going back 1300-1400 years earlier to the time before the Babylonian exile, to the time where Israel was in slave, in the land of Egypt and God brought them out into the Sinai desert through his servant Moses. There was Israel in Exodus.

During that time the people of God rebelled. They weren't happy to be trudging through a barren desert. They didn't have enough trust in God and because of that God punished them and sent many-many serpents and the poisonous serpents bit the people and the people started dying off in the thousands and then they turned to Moses for help.

Numbers 21:8-9 (ESV) And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

So here we have a situation where people were dying everywhere. They were dying from snake bites. They were in the process of dying, they could only crawl, the snake bite burns through their flesh and the solution was that Moses would actually make a serpent. The same serpent that killed them, he has to hang it on a pole and anyone who looked at the serpent, he would live.

This is very significant because in episode in the history of Israel depicts how people were saved from physical death. They were forced to look at the bronze image of the awful poisonous serpent. They were forced to look at the very thing that would have been their death and this symbolically made the people aware of their sin. The serpent reminded them of their own evil ungrateful rebellion towards God which for us is what in essence sin is. The second thing is that, in order to be healed, they didn't have to climb seven mountains or pay a huge sum of money, they just had to look. It was just as simple as that, they had to look and believe that by looking at this bronze serpent they would be saved. Even a dying man could manage a look and looking took just faith.

That is the historical situation, Jesus makes the connection.

John 3:14-16 (ESV) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

So here we have it, we have the parallel situation. For the people in the Sinai desert, they were dying of physical poison, bitten by snakes because of their disobedience to God and the solution for them was that Moses lifted up a bronze snake and those who looked at the bronze snake, they knew they were dying because of the snake, they were dying because of physical poison, because of their sin and all that they have to do was to look and believe that God will heal them through that serpent. In the same way, just as Moses have lifted up the snake, now Jesus said that he would be lifted up on the cross alike the bronze snake. The people who looked at him would know that they were dying because of the spiritual poison that was in them that is sin. That is the sin of man that put Jesus on the cross and this parallel situation of healing of that sin is just looking, just believing in Jesus.

So here we are at the end of Jesus teaching. We need to draw all the strands of his teachings together. How are we to be born again?

We start off with what Jesus said, we all have to be born again and we need to be born again of the water and the spirit and that reminds Nicodemus of the prophesy 500 years before Jesus by Ezekiel in chapter 36 that God would affect cleansing with water, which means God will forgive his people for their rebellion and their sin and he will put a new nature into their hearts. A new spiritual nature to enable them become spiritually alive to feel the need for God to be aware of God be have the ability to believe in Him and to really walk in love with him. People like Nicodemus didn't understand that this would be a divine initiative. So, what they did was, they obeyed the law, tried as hard as they could with good works, gave charity to the poor in order to earn salvation. However ,salvation and forgiveness of sin is not something that we could affect ourselves because we are indebted because of our sin we were spiritually dead. The debt had to be paid and then Jesus reminded us of Moses in Numbers 21, time when people sinned and they were dying of sin because of the poison of snakes and all they had to do to be healed was to look at the bronze snake, which was put up on the pole and drawing these two pieces of scripture together, Jesus now points to himself in verse 14 and 15

John 3:14-15 (ESV) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life

So this was how God was going to affect spiritual new, spiritual rebirth, how he was going to forgive them of their sins, by offering his son to be lifted up on the cross as a sacrifice, so that the death of sin would be paid, so that they could be legitimately, we could be legitimately forgiven and once that was done and we have new righteous nature. God's Spirit would come into a person and he would be inwardly spiritually born again and outwardly this new nature would be seen as faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God who died for us. Only a spiritually alive born again person will be able to believe in Jesus and have eternal life.

Now why did God do this?

God did this because in verse 16 it is written

John 3:16 (ESV) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

So God shows us his heart. He shows us how much he loves the world that was in rebellion against him and he initiated this move where he gave his only son, so that all we have to do is to give our lives to him, to believe in him, so that we will not perish but have eternal life. Just as the people who were actually healed from physical poison, by looking at the snake we can be healed of spiritual poison, our sin, by looking at Jesus.

However, just as in the Old Testament during Moses time, those who refused to look at the snake on the bronze serpent laid up on the pole would go to default mode. They would die.

John 3:17-18 (ESV) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

The bronze serpent placed a 1300 years ago was not placed to condemn the world. If they didn't look at the bronze serpent, the default mode would be that they would die of the physical poison. The same thing, God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but just as the bronze serpent, he was to provide healing, salvation

and forgiveness of sins.

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God

The default mode is condemnation. The default mode is to continue with the spiritual poison coursing through our veins, causing eternal death and spiritual death.

LET'S SUMMARIZE:

This is the born again process. It is a dual process. On one hand, it is on God's side. On the other hand, it is our side. On God's side, he looks at us and we are spiritually dead. We can't respond to him and what he does is send someone to share the gospel with us and when that happens, the Holy Spirit moves and causes us to be born again. Looking on the human side, all we see is that when someone presents the gospel to us, we are able to see the spiritual truth, we are able to see that we are sinful, we are guilty, there is a need for salvation and Jesus is God, Jesus is the son of God, he did die on the cross for us and we have faith and when we have faith and we believe in the Son of God that shows that we are born again and this decision needs to happen for every single person in the world.

Questions on the Passage

1. Why did Nicodemus think he was already qualified to go in to heaven more so than most people in Israel?
2. Why did Jesus tell Nicodemus that without being born again he could not even see the kingdom of God?
3. What did Paul mean by saying apart from Christ we are spiritually dead?
4. What did Jesus mean by saying that in order to be spiritually born again we have to be born of the water and the Spirit? Ezekiel 36:25-27
5. Why did Jesus say that being born again was like the wind blowing?
6. Why did Jesus refer to the time when Moses held up the bronze serpent for the Israelites in the Sinai desert and relate it to being born again?

Application Questions

- What is the evidence that a person has been born again?
- What should you say to a person who says that he is not willing to make a commitment to become a Christian because he is not sure if he can actually be a genuine Christian?