

What Exactly Is Conversion?



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The Bible speaks of the need to be converted. Without conversion we cannot be a true child of God or enter the kingdom of heaven. But what does the Bible mean when it talks about conversion?

What Conversion Is Not

In John chapter 3 we read of a man called Nicodemus who went to see Jesus. He was very religious, being a member of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of the Jews. The Pharisees were men who tried to meticulously keep all the rules and regulations they felt God required.

Yet this highly religious man was in for a shock. For all his efforts and religiosity, Christ told him that he was not a member of the kingdom of God. Christ said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus was someone who had a high regard of Christ. In a very genuine way he called him "Rabbi" - "teacher". He could see that God was with Christ and that Jesus had this remarkable authority. But for all

this, Nicodemus was still not truly converted. So Christ says to him again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

There can be many like Nicodemus. They may be religious people—they may occasionally attend church and have a very high opinion of Christ. They may even say, "I believe." And yet they have not been born again. They do not know true spiritual life because they have not been converted. But what is conversion?

Conversion Described

Conversion is not just a "turning over of a new leaf" or taking up some form of religion. We have all been born physically yet Christ insists that there is another birth which is not a physical one, but spiritual.

This new birth, Christ says, is due to the powerful work of God's Spirit. Those who are converted are given spiritual life and this new life they receive results in a thorough change in the person. This gift of spiritual life Christ compares to the wonder of natural birth. Just as

each person has a physical birth, so every one needs this spiritual birth.

The Bible says that without this birth we are dead spiritually and have no real love or desire for the things of God. We don't see them as attractive.

We may acknowledge God just as Nicodemus did and in many ways even have a belief in God. But we don't know what it is to truly know God, to have peace with Him or have the experience of knowing Christ as our Saviour.

Conversion is a far greater thing than just deciding to become religious or trying to live as God would have us live. It's a powerful work which God does in us, whereby we are made a new person. We have this spiritual life given to us and we're given a new nature which results in a marked change in our attitude to God, to Christ and to sin.

But there are other things that Christ tells us about this great work that God does when He converts someone.

Christ says: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Christ makes it clear that this

great work of the new birth and of conversion is given to those who have *saving faith* in Christ.

This new life is given to the man, woman, boy or girl, who sees that they are a sinner who fails God's laws and has been rebellious towards God. They know they cannot improve themselves or make themselves in any way acceptable to God.

They must look away from themselves and look to the Lord Jesus Christ. They must look to and trust in the One who lived a perfect life and then

died in the place of sinners, taking the guilt and punishment that sinners deserve.

But Christ also tells us that when God converts someone it also results in repentance. So what occurs in the heart of the one who knows this great change of the new birth and conversion? Well Christ says this: "...He who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (v21)

There is this great change in their hearts towards God and sin. Whereas once they were repelled by God and the thought of God (preferring darkness rather than light – verses 19, 20) they now see

"Conversion is a far greater thing than just deciding to become religious"

God and the things of God as attractive and they come to the light. They are never perfect and often fall but now they are never happy in sin. They desire increasingly to know God and to obey Him.

The Need for Conversion

Christ says that there is a great need for conversion. Being religious, trying to earn God's acceptance, seeking to make yourself a better person, even seeking to live as the Bible would have us live just won't do. Jesus says to us - "You must be born again."

This great change is when God comes to someone and works in their heart. They were dead spiritually, yet God imparts this spiritual life. By God's power they are given a new nature—this spiritual birth.

Whereas once they were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and were happy to live for themselves contrary to God's laws and away from Him, there is this incredible change. They now know God and Jesus Christ and have a sense of peace with God and know His love. They enjoy a true fellowship and relationship with God.

Are You Converted?

There is no more wonderful thing than to know that we have passed from death to life.

There is nothing greater than having this peace and this relationship with God both in this life and in the life to come.

Christ makes it clear that nothing else in this world is of greater importance. Christ says: "For God

"...yet God imparts this spiritual life. By God's power they are given a new nature - this spiritual birth" so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. " If we don't know this

"everlasting life" Christ says we will perish and be eternally lost.

But the wonder is that we can truly know this life. We can know what it is to be saved. We can know what it is to really "Rejoice in the Lord!" as it says on the front of this cover.

Can I ask you – have you been converted? Are you "Born Again" and so able to "Rejoice in the Lord"?

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