

Easter 3 / April 19, 2026

1 Peter 1:23

“Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”

Born Again through the Living and Abiding Word of God

Jesus had a conversation with a Pharisee name Nicodemus, who was fascinated by Jesus and the miraculous signs He did, which could only have been done by someone who came from God. He was curious about His teaching regarding the kingdom of God. He was perplexed when Jesus told him no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is *“born again.”* How could a person be born again? He asked how a person could enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born again? Nicodemus had misunderstood Jesus and the kingdom of God. First, Jesus wasn’t talking about an earthly kingdom. He was talking about the righteous reign of God which begins in the human heart. The kingdom of God comes into our hearts through faith, created by the seed of the living and abiding word of God. The kingdom of God is His reign in our hearts in which His thoughts become our thoughts and His ways become our ways.

Jesus had positive regard for Nicodemus, he was one of the few Pharisees who came to Him with respect. However, when Nicodemus asked how a person could return to his mother’s womb to be born again, He was astonished that a spiritual leader of Israel was so carnal, so earthly and unspiritual in his thinking. He was thinking the thoughts of humans in a material world rather than the thoughts of God, which are spirit and truth. Jesus wasn’t talking about a physical rebirth. He was speaking of the second birth of the Holy Spirit, in which the human spirit dead in sin, alienated from the life of God, is made alive in relationship with God through the working of the Holy Spirit in the word and by the washing of water in Holy Baptism. To be born again is to made alive to God through faith in Jesus as our God and Saviour by the power of the living and abiding word of God.

The second birth of the human spirit takes place when we see Jesus as more than our teacher, but most importantly, as our God and Saviour. Nicodemus addressed Jesus as ‘Teacher, Rabbi’. Jesus certainly was a teacher. In fact, there was no greater teacher than Jesus. He is the One greater than Solomon, who was renown for his great wisdom and understanding. Jesus’ wisdom was unassailable. His teaching irreproachable. Solomon was gifted with wisdom from God. Jesus is

the embodiment of the wisdom of God as Son of God from eternity. Nevertheless, the most important thing Jesus taught was Himself as our God and Saviour. As St. Peter says in our text, Jesus ransomed us from the futility of sin and the darkness of death with His precious blood shed on the cross for the atonement of human sin, including yours and mine. Jesus is the Saviour. He offers salvation for all to receive through the word of the gospel. He is the Saviour of all who receive the second birth through faith in Him as their God and Saviour.

The most important thing Jesus taught Nicodemus was Himself as his God and Saviour. Jesus said to Nicodemus, *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have eternal life.”* All Nicodemus needed to be born again was faith to believe those words. All who are born again believe those words! The Holy Spirit gives us faith through those words. To be born again is to believe in Jesus as our God and Saviour. Jesus said to His disciples, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* We learn about God through human teachers. We come to God through Jesus. We experience the second birth of the spirit, when through the word and working of the Holy Spirit, we see and receive Jesus as our God and Saviour. We are born again through faith in Jesus inspired by the Holy Spirit through the living and abiding word of God.

St. Peter speaks of the second birth two times in the first chapter of his first letter. In his opening salutation he says, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* Again in our text, where he says that believers have been *“born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”* We are born first into this world of sin and death through our parents. We are born into the kingdom of God, into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died to heal the human relationship with God, broken by the sin of the first people. Jesus’ resurrection is God’s testimony that He accepted Jesus’ sacrifice for the atonement of sin. Jesus’ resurrection is testimony that His words are truth. Jesus’ resurrection is proof that He is the way and the truth and the life and that all who believe come to the Father through him, now through faith, fully and forever in eternal life. Jesus’ resurrection is God’s promise that our sins are forgiven. Jesus’ resurrection is our personal assurance that He has a place for us, now in His heart and a place prepared for us in His kingdom, in our share of Christ’s resurrection when He returns and makes us, all believers and all things new.

We need to be born again, because we all are conceived and born into a broken relationship with God through the sin of our first ancestors. We are by nature without God and without hope in the world. We are born again to a real and living hope when we are born into a living relationship with God through faith in Jesus as our Saviour, sealed by baptism into His death and resurrection. In Jesus we are born into relationship with God in time and for eternity. Because we are born into relationship with God, we have a real and living hope in time and for eternity. We are born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us through the living and abiding word of God.

There is no element in the world more powerful and uncontrollable than water. There is nothing more powerful in the world and more effective in the human spirit than the word of God. God's word commands the water. Jesus walks on the water to show His power as the Son of God. God connects His word to water in baptism, by which He gives us the second birth of the Spirit and a share in Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus called the physically dead to arise and at the sound of His voice, the speaking of His word, the dead were made alive. Most importantly, Jesus calls the spiritually dead to arise through the word of the gospel, empowered by the Holy Spirit, sealed in the water of baptism. Jesus said, "*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.*" To be born again is to be baptized into His dying and rising and to believe in Him as our God and Saviour. Both the power of faith and the promise of resurrection, come through the living and abiding word of God.

Peter's concern in this chapter in general and in our text in particular, is that we live in the power and promise of the word of God by honouring Jesus as our Saviour and by loving one another earnestly from hearts made pure by the precious blood of Jesus, "*a lamb without blemish or spot.*" Speaking of true and false teachers, and by extension true and false believers, Jesus said, "*You will know them by their fruit.*" The first fruit of the second birth of the Spirit and the word is love; love towards God and love towards others, especially towards the household faith, our sisters and brothers in Christ. In his first letter St. John asks how a person can claim to love God whom he has not seen, while hating the brother or sister, whom he sees day in and day out? The power to love God and our sisters and brothers comes not from ourselves, no more than the power to believe in Jesus as our God and Saviour comes from ourselves. Rather the power to love and the power to believe in Jesus comes from the Holy Spirit working through the living and abiding word of God.

If we are growing cold in love towards others, we are also probably growing cold in love towards God. If we are growing cold in love towards God and others, we are

probably also growing cold to the word of God. The fire of faith, the fire by which our hearts are warmed in love towards God and love towards others, is the living and abiding word of God. Jesus told Nicodemus, *“Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* God brings us to faith, brings His kingdom in our hearts, gives us spiritual rebirth through the word and washing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told Nicodemus, *“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”* God brings us into His kingdom through faith in Jesus by the power of the His living and abiding word. God keeps us in His kingdom through the living and abiding word.

God preserves our faith in Jesus through all the adversities, temptations, trials and challenges of life through the living and abiding word. Through the word and working of the Holy Spirit, God opens our eyes to see His kingdom in fellow believers. He moves our hearts to share the kingdom message of salvation through faith in Jesus with those who do not believe. His word is the power to believe. His word is the power to eternal life to all who believe. There is nothing more powerful than the word of God. It is the power of salvation to those who believe. There is nothing more valuable than the word of God. It shows us Jesus our Saviour and through it the Holy Spirit opens our hearts to believe. There is nothing more lasting than the word of God. Everything we have in live and our lives themselves will pass away, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Those who abide in the word through faith in Jesus will abide forever. God grant this to us all for the sake of Jesus. Amen