Jesus, what do you mean?

***“You must be born again.”*** Or, Can we really have the life of God Himself? John 3:7

**The Words:**

 Jesus surprises Nicodemus by using these words, but questions him as to why he doesn’t understand them. Nicodemus was, after all, a teacher of the Jews, and should have understood Jesus’ meaning. But how? The words do not appear in the TANAKH (our “Old Testament”), so how could he possibly have known what they meant? How can anyone?

**The Challenge:**

 The term “born again Christian” is often heard today, as if there is any other kind! The words have been hijacked, as it were, in our culture, and have come to be roughly parallel to anything from evangelical to Pentecostal to fundamentalist. Most use the term to refer to anyone who takes the Bible reasonably literally. But even Nicodemus was confused when Jesus first said it, so maybe it does need a word or two of context and explanation.

**The Principle: Birth from Above is necessary, amazing, and only from God.**

 “Born again” also can be translated “born from above,” but neither is very descriptive. Jesus, however, fills in the blanks of our questioning. . ..

 The New Birth is absolutely necessary, incomprehensible to the natural mind, and comes only as God wills. How does it happen?

 God’s Spirit (John 3:5, 8) freely gives life to spiritually dead persons. . .

 through the death and resurrection of Jesus (John 3:14-16, 1 Pet. 1:3)

 using God’s Word (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23)

 which calls forth faith (John 1:12, 13).

Faith, which justifies us in God’s sight, is neither cause nor means of the New Birth, but a quality of one who has been quickened by the Holy Spirit through the reality and proclamation of the Gospel. Eph. 2:1-9; Col. 2:13

**The Application: What Nick should have known. . .**

 Jesus says that Nicodemus should have anticipated the New Birth. That means that his Bible, the Bible Jesus read, predicted it. And so we should see even better. . .

1. Moses predicted the Law’s failure, and a “Plan B” covenant.

 Deuteronomy 29:1; 30:1-14; Paul quotes from this passage in Romans 10:5-13. Righteousness could never have come through lawkeeping, due to our sinfulness, so a “new heart” would be needed, that is, a new person created, that is, a New Birth.

2. Jeremiah, seven hundred years later, outlines a “New Covenant.”

 This prophet takes Moses’ words a step further, declaring that God will change the heart, i. e., person, and forgive his sins. Jeremiah 31:31-34, quoted twice in Hebrews 8 and 10, is applicable today!

3. Ezekiel puts the finishing touches on the “birth from above.”

 Here the same “regathering” language is paired with forgiveness, God’s Spirit, a new heart, and water. Ezek. 36:23-27; Titus 3:5, 6