



GOING UP?

A.W. Tozer once wrote:

"O, God, we don't want anything You have, we want You. That's the cry of a soul on its way up."

A soul *"on its way up"* is a soul that is on its way up to GOD. It is a soul that has been truly born from above. In John Chapter 3, the Apostle John recorded a conversation the Lord Jesus had with a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews that had been hearing the teachings of Jesus. Because he is a man that knows Scripture, he knows that Jesus has come from God and that God is with Him because of the signs that Jesus has been doing -- which no one can do unless God is with him (John 3:2).

One night, Nicodemus comes to Jesus. His heart is full of questions for this Teacher from God. Before Nicodemus even utters a question, Jesus -- who knows his heart and already knows his questions -- says to him: "Truthfully, truthfully, I say to you, *unless one is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" Nicodemus then asks, "How can a man be born when he is old?..." Jesus answered him again, "Truthfully, truthfully, I say to you, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, "You must be born from above."*

Anothen ἄνωθεν
Born from above;
from a force outside ourselves

Nicodemus is not an ignorant man. He is learned in the Scriptures. He serves as a religious ruler of the Jews. In our culture today, he would have many letters after his name. But, Nicodemus needs Jesus to give him spiritual understanding of God's Word. Jesus's answer points him to Ezekiel's prophecy of Israel's conversion to God. The beauty of this Word from God (Ezekiel 36:25-27) is that it describes not only the conversion of Israel as a nation -- it also describes the true conversion of every soul to God -- whether they be Jew or Gentile. Every human soul must be born from above in order to go to God. Listen to these Words God gave Ezekiel:

²⁵ ...I [God] will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I [God] will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ Moreover, I [God] will give you a new heart and put a new [human] spirit within you; and I [God] will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I [God] will put My [Holy] Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

It is amazing how these Words coincide with Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus! *In order for a soul to be on its way up to the kingdom of God, it must be born from above!* Every person's soul is filthy with sin. No matter how religious/benevolent/nice -- every soul has committed rebellion [sin] against a holy God; and when Holy God is turning a soul to Himself, He must first cleanse that filthy, idol-filled soul with His clean water. Titus 3:5 tells us that what God uses to wash and cleanse us with is His Word. It is His Living Word in Christ.

After cleansing, God then removes that person's stubborn, self-willed heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh that is pliable in the hands of God and responsive to Him. God then gives the gift of a new, born-from-above human spirit AND ALSO places His Holy Spirit within that new spirit!!! AND the Holy Spirit, Who is God, then causes that soul to know God and to walk with God in obedience to His Word. This is now a precious soul that has been born from above and that God Himself has made into a New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Scripture is clear: A person is not born from above because of their heritage, or because of an emotional impulse or because of their own will. (John 1:13) It is God Himself that causes a person to be born from above. So, like Nicodemus -- we ask: *How can this be?* Jesus's answer to Nicodemus is that whoever believes in God's only begotten Son shall not perish, but have eternal life. This is how a soul gets to be *on its way up*.

So, what does it mean to believe in Jesus? That will be our next topic!



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