

JESUS: THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

Jesus: The Gift of God's Love

Twelve Daily Studies for Christmas

John 3:1–17; 7:45–52; 19:38–40; Romans 5:8

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

DAY 8

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus—the moment God's Son entered humanity with a mission to change the course of history and save the world. Sin had humankind under a curse of death. "You were *dead* because of your disobedience and your many sins" (Ephesians 2:1, emphasis added), wrote the apostle Paul. But then Jesus changed our destiny through His sin-bearing death and life-giving resurrection.

Through His triumph, Jesus won for us what we were powerless to attain: new life. Paul explained that God "gave us *life* when he raised Christ from the dead" (2:5, emphasis added) and "created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (2:10). The theological word for this heavenly re-creation is *regeneration*. Jesus called it being "born again" (John 3:3).

How does a person become born again? Jesus illustrated to Nicodemus the single requirement using an ancient account from Israel's past that Nicodemus would have known well. Before we eavesdrop on the private conversation between the Savior and the Pharisee, let's prepare ourselves to receive Jesus' teaching.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Charles Wesley reflects on our new birth through Jesus' birth in the third verse of his classic hymn "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Read or sing the words, but take a moment to meditate on their meaning.

Quotable

*Every Christmas,
God announces
to every one of us,
the three words
that are most
important to hear.
He says to us,
"I love you."*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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*Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings,*

*Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that men no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.¹*

Write a few of your own lines of praise to your Savior who was born to give you second birth.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

We pick up the nighttime conversation after Jesus jolted Nicodemus with the statement, “Unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3). He wrinkled the Pharisee’s brow by explaining only “the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life” (3:6).

“How are these things possible?” Nicodemus asked. Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don’t understand these things? I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won’t believe our testimony. But if you don’t believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.” (3:9–15)



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Observation: Believing What We Don't Fully Understand

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, the first step is to observe the passage by noting any repeated words, contrasting words, cause and effect, or allusions to other biblical passages.

Circle or highlight the most repeated word in John 3:9–15 and write it down. Also, write down the contrasts that Jesus made between the earthly and the heavenly (John 3:12) as well as between human limitations and His mission (3:13).

What is the focal point of Jesus' message to Nicodemus (3:15)?

Nicodemus was the type of person who had to know *how* a thing worked before he believed it. Jesus, however, told skeptical Nicodemus that it was no use trying to figure out the “new birth.” It was a miracle conceived by the Spirit in the heavenlies. So rather than scrutinize the gift, *believe in the Giver . . .* and receive eternal life!



Interpretation and Correlation: Belief and New Life

To illustrate the connection between belief and eternal life, Jesus drew up for Nicodemus a mental image from the pages of the Pentateuch. Read how Moses lifted the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness so that God healed all who looked upon it (*Numbers 21:4–9*).



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The Israelites' impatience and complaining grew out of their root sin of unbelief, which they vocalized by speaking against God. Of what did they accuse God and Moses (Numbers 21:5)?

The poison from the snakes symbolized the curse of sin coursing through the spiritual bloodstream of humankind. Like snakebites, the bite of sin leads to death in every human. Moses lifting the snake on the pole symbolized God's offer to end His judgment on the Israelites and dispense healing mercy. What event did the lifting of the snake foreshadow, according to Jesus (John 12:32–33)?

The Israelites, who were under the sentence of death, received new life when they looked at the snake on the pole. What point was Jesus making about the act of belief, the object of our belief, and God's merciful response?

The same love that moved God to restore life to the Israelites stirred God to lift up His Son on the cross to give eternal life to all who look to Jesus in faith. What a wonderful act of mercy!



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Application: Because of Love, God Gave His Son

Christmas is not usually a time we think about snakebites and poison, sin and death. But just as a star gleams brighter against a dark sky, the love of God through Jesus shines with even more brilliance against the bleakness of our condition without Christ. As Chuck Swindoll said in his message, “Every Christmas, God announces to every one of us, the three words that are most important to hear. He says to us, ‘I love you.’”

Do you need to hear those words from your heavenly Father this Christmas? Take a moment as you close this study to “listen” to God’s love. What message do you hear God saying to you personally through the birth of His Son?

Today, as you move through the pre-Christmas hustle of shopping or decorating, carry God’s love in your heart as you thank Him for His life-giving gift of Jesus.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, words cannot express the gratitude I feel for the gift of Jesus, who entered the stream of humanity with the mission to bear the judgment for my sin. Help me to live today in the joy and peace of knowing I have been born again—given eternal life because of the One who was born to give me second birth. I worship You with a grateful heart. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles Wesley, altered, “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,” in *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (n.p.: Word Music/Integrity Music, 1997), hymn 277.



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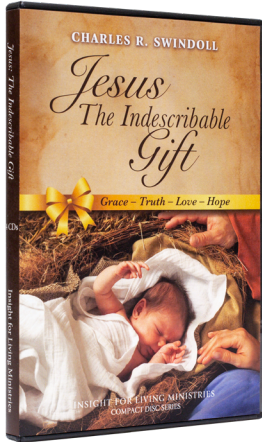
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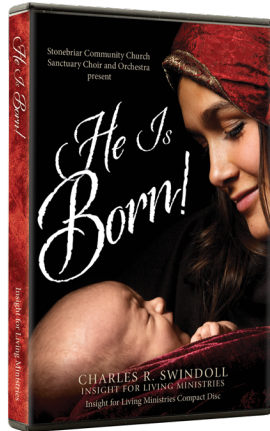
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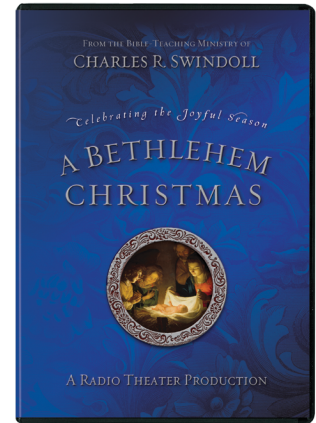
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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