

## “Verily, Verily, I Say Unto Thee”

---

by Wayne Goff

Growing up with the **King James Version**, I was made **acutely** aware of the phrase “*Verily, verily*.” I was taught that whenever Jesus said “*verily, verily*” that He had something **extremely important** to say. In fact, anytime Jesus said “*verily*,” He had something important to say! This is lost in the newer translations, where the Greek is translated variously.

“*Verily, verily*” is found twenty-five times in the King James Version of the New Testament, and **only** in the Gospel of John (1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24-25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20, 21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18). It is translated “*most assuredly*” in the New King James Version. And indeed, Jesus is speaking of something of great importance when He utters these words.

The word “**verily**” is actually a Hebrew word which was *transliterated* into Greek, and then into English. It is the word “amen.” A.T. Robertson tells us that it is “an illustration of Christ’s authoritative manner of speaking” (*Word Pictures in the N.T.*, V:31). *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* further explains: “it came to be used as an adverb by which something is asserted or confirmed: a. at the beginning of a discourse, *surely, of a truth, truly*; so frequent in the discourses of Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke... The repetition of the word, employed by John alone in his Gospel (twenty-five times), has the force of a superlative, *most assuredly*...”

### Examples Of Its Use

John first quotes Jesus in John 1:51, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*” This statement was in response to Nathanael’s declaration, “*You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*” (v. 49). Jesus is impressed with the ease of Nathanael’s faith in Him as the Son of God. He is affirming that He will certainly see greater miracles than the one that led him to say this! So with this example we can see the power of the expression “*verily, verily*.” It is always worth paying attention to this pronouncement!

The next occasion we find the phrase is when Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus about the new spiritual birth (John 3:3, 5). Is Jesus teaching something **extremely important** when He uses the phrase? **Absolutely!** “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” Surprisingly this teacher of Israel misses the point completely, leading Jesus to reiterate and rephrase Himself (v. 5): “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*” So the new birth involves water (baptism) and the Spirit (faith in the truth), without which no man can be saved! Not only did Nicodemus continue to struggle with the **spiritual nature** of the concept, but many denominational people today do as well! However, baptism of a penitent believer for the remission of sins is plainly, simply, and repeatedly taught in the Scriptures. Like Nicodemus, this only becomes difficult when one has a *preconceived idea* about something.

### Study The Phrase

Take the time to study the references given in the second paragraph of this article. You will find things that are indeed **extremely important** and **relevant** to your own spiritual life. You will be glad you did! Then, if your appetite continues, go back and locate the seventy-four times the word is used *singly* in the New Testament: **Matthew**, 30 times; **Mark**, 15 times; **Luke**, 8 times; **Acts**, 4 times; **Romans**, 3 times; **1 Corinthians**, 3 times; **Galatians**, 1 time; **1 Thessalonians**, 1 time; **Hebrews**, 7 times; **1 Peter**, 1 time; **1 John**, 1 time. The single use of the word signifies something noteworthy that should not escape our attention.

291003