

## The New Birth

John 3:1-21

July 3, 2022

### Introduction:

1. After challenging the entire Jewish religious system in the cleansing of the temple, Jesus will now challenge the very foundation of the Jewish religion in answering Nicodemus's challenge of His authority.
2. Nicodemus embodies the brokenness of man and his religion.
3. As we will see from the text, the interaction between Nicodemus and Jesus is part of the larger conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities, and ultimately between God and humanity.

### Message:

#### 1. Nicodemus's Provocative Introduction (1-2)

##### a. Nicodemus's Identity (1)

- i. Nicodemus was a Pharisee: Pharisees were zealously committed to the traditions of the elders to supplement and even amend the laws of the Scriptures.
- ii. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews: he was among an elite group often referred to in John as "the high priests and Pharisees" (7:32, 45; 11:47, 57; 18:3).
- iii. Nicodemus was a descendant of an elite Jewish family: only 4 Palestinian Jews from 330 BC to AD 200 had the name Nicodemus, and all four belonged to the same family, the Gurion family; the Gurion family ruled the Jews along with the high priests.
- iv. Nicodemus then was the perfect representative of the Jewish people, and he is facing off with Jesus, the perfect representative of God.

##### b. Nicodemus's Challenge (2)

- i. Nicodemus approaches Jesus at night; every occurrence of "night" in John has negative connotations (9:4; 11:10; 13:30; 21:3).
- ii. Back in this day, it was common to begin a challenge by flattering the opponent before attacking him.
- iii. Nicodemus addresses Jesus as "Rabbi"; a Rabbi was a professional teacher of Judaism.
- iv. Nicodemus refers to Jesus as a teacher; teachers of the Scriptures were held in the highest regard.
- v. Nicodemus reveals that he has been sent by others – "we know..."
- vi. Nicodemus describes Jesus as sent from God, acknowledging the miracles as proof that God was empowering Him.

#### 2. Jesus' First Exchange with Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (3-4)

##### a. Jesus' Declaration (3)

- i. Before Nicodemus can continue his challenge, Jesus answers with "Amen, Amen" or "Verily, Verily."
- ii. Jesus cuts to the heart of the matter and exposes Nicodemus's need of a new birth in order to experience the kingdom of God.

##### b. Nicodemus's Response (4)

- i. Nicodemus response is an expression of confusion and even rebellion.
- ii. Nicodemus asks the questions that all readers of this Gospel would ask.

#### 3. Jesus' Second Exchange with Nicodemus: "Born of Water and of the Spirit" (5-10)

##### a. Jesus' Declaration (5-8)

- i. Once again, Jesus answers with "Amen, Amen" or "Verily, Verily."
- ii. Jesus makes clear that the new birth that Nicodemus needs is spiritual.
- iii. "Water" in John refers to cleansing (9:7; 13:5) or sustaining life (cf. 4:10-14; 6:35; 7:37-39).
- iv. Without the new birth, Nicodemus cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
- v. Jesus makes it clear that the new birth is different than physical birth (6).

- vi. Jesus responds to Nicodemus and to those who sent him by addressing him with “you” plural (7). The need for the new birth is universal; all men must be born again to enter the kingdom of God.
    - vii. Jesus uses the wind to illustrate the unseen nature of the new birth (8).
  - b. Nicodemus’s Response (9)
    - i. Nicodemus has no answer to Jesus’ statements, so he counters with a question.
    - ii. Just as Nicodemus is silenced before Jesus, all of us stand guilty before God without excuse (Romans 1:20).
- 4. Jesus’ Victory Announcement: The Cross (11-15)
  - a. Jesus begins this response with “Amen, Amen” just as he began the first two.
  - b. Verse 11 is full of first person plurals, also known as the majestic plural, which assert Jesus’ authority and majesty as the Unique Son of God.
  - c. Jesus testifies of what He has seen and experienced, and exposes Nicodemus’s refusal to believe His testimony.
  - d. Verse 12 – Jesus is standing before Nicodemus in flesh and blood, and yet Nicodemus refuses to believe or comprehend what Jesus is saying.
  - e. Verse 13 – Jesus points to His uniqueness as the only One Who has access to the throne room of God.
  - f. Verse 14 – Jesus, the Son of Man, is our only hope, just as Moses was Israel’s mediator between them and God (cf. Numbers 21:4-9).
    - i. Just as the Israelites spoke against God, Nicodemus and the Jews were speaking against Jesus.
    - ii. Just as Moses lifted up a rod to provide a temporary deliverance, Jesus would have to be lifted up on the cross to provide an eternal deliverance.
  - g. Verse 15 – Jesus makes it clear that those who believe on the Son of Man lifted up for us have eternal life.
- 5. Narrator’s Commentary (16-21)
  - a. Based on the vocabulary being used, it appears that verse 16 begins the narrator’s comments; “only begotten Son” is only used by John (1:14, 18; 1 John 4:9), and Jesus not normally refer to His Father as “God.”
  - b. Verse 16 – The motivation behind the words and actions of Jesus is God’s love for the world (cf. Romans 5:8); the provision offered is eternal life.
  - c. Verse 17 – The reason that Jesus was sent was not to condemn, because all men already stand condemned before God; the reason that Jesus was sent was to save!
  - d. Verse 18 –The reason Jesus came was to offer justification to those who believe in the name (the person and work) of the unique Son of God.
  - e. Verse 19-21
    - i. Men love darkness rather than the Light because they are evil (19).
    - ii. Those who do evil hate the Light, because they don’t want their sin to be exposed (20).
    - iii. Those who do the truth by believing in the person and work of Jesus can step into the light boldly, because the Light reveals the work of God in them (21).

Conclusion:

1. Have you come to the realization that your religion is incapable of earning you an entrance into the kingdom of God?
2. Have you come to the realization that you need to be born again spiritually?
3. Have you realized that without Christ, you stand condemned before God?
4. What are you looking to for deliverance? Are you believing in your own efforts, or are you believing in Jesus to save you from the wrath of God?
5. Are you sharing this message with the lost world around you?