

What does “Born Again” Really Mean?



John 3:1-18

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;
²this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." ³Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
⁴Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

John 3:1-18 *(cont'd)*

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

John 3:1-18 *(cont'd)*

Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things? ¹¹"Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness. ¹²"If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³"And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man.

John 3:1-18 *(cont'd)*

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.

¹⁶"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.

John 3:1-18 *(cont'd)*

"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:1

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

- Nicodemus - Pharisee and Jewish Ruler
- Religious - Followed all the ordinances
- Intelligent - Minimum requirement for Pharisee
- Scholar - Pharisees memorized the Pentateuch (1st 5 Books of the Bible)
- Teacher / Honorable man

What is a Pharisee?

Acts 26:4-5

"So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem;

⁵since they have known about me for a long time previously, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

What a Pharisee Does?

Luke 18:10-14

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. ¹¹"The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. ¹²'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

¹³"But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' ¹⁴"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

John 3:1-2

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; [2] this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.

Jeremiah 29:13

And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

What was the possible question of Nicodemus in his heart?

- a. How can I go to heaven?**
- b. Will my qualifications bring me to heaven?**

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John 3:3

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

1st Principle -The Necessity of Regeneration

IT IS NOT OPTIONAL SINCE IT IS AN ABSOLUTE CONDITION, IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS.

- Did Nicodemus understand?

What did Nicodemus understand the words of Jesus to mean?

- Look at the question of Nicodemus?

He was looking at the answer of Jesus from a completely different perspective. Physical (Nicodemus) versus Spiritual (Jesus)

- Can a man cause himself to be born again? How?

- He did not know?

2nd Principle -The Futility of Religion or Position

- Jesus did not praise him for being a Pharisee.
- The fact that he belonged to the Jewish race (the chosen people) did not matter either.
- Jesus did not ask him to perform any ritual.

If Jesus asked him to go to church; What would Nicodemus' question be?

- Where? To pray, what to pray for. All this he could do !!! Jesus was not demanding some superficial, easy-to-do formula or prayer, Jesus called for nothing short of a complete overhaul, a regeneration. This is something man cannot do on his own. He cannot earn it either.

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John 3:3

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:4

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

What does Jesus demand in v.5?

- Born of water and Spirit.

What does it mean to be born of water and Spirit?

- Some people say it is baptism; that is unlikely.

John 4:2

**(although Jesus Himself was not baptizing,
but His disciples were)**

Ezekiel 36:25-27

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Old Testament, water was used as a symbol for cleansing.
cf. Eze. 36:25-27, Water is used by God to do what? Symbol of purification, the promise of God.

This is the Old Testament version of what it means to be born again. It is spiritual cleansing-spiritual regeneration.

*WHAT JESUS WAS IN EFFECT SAYING WAS THAT NICODEMUS **NEEDED TO BE SPIRITUALLY PURIFIED AND SPIRITUALLY REBORN.** THIS IS VERIFIED ELABORATED BY JESUS IN V.6*

John 3:6

That which is born of the flesh is flesh,
and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

What two births are contrasted?

- We have already been born ONCE from our physical parents.
- We need to be born of the Spirit to be born again.
- Where does spiritual birth comes from?

John 3:7

Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again.”

- Jesus repeats the absolute condition. Did He consider it crucial?**
- There are no options.**

We need to be spiritually purified - reborn.

John 3:8

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Jesus now illustrates, using pictures to explain His meaning.

- You can feel the wind, you can see its effects swaying of trees, ocean waves, but you cannot see the wind itself.
- To be born of the Spirit is to be like the wind, you can see the effects, in changed lives, new joy, love, and peace but the Spirit Himself cannot be seen.

- Faith in Jesus Christ + 0
(Nothing) = Salvation
Resulting to good works
- Faith in Jesus Christ +
Good Works = Salvation

John 3:9

Nicodemus answered and said to Him,
"How can these things be?"

John 3:10-13

Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things? ¹¹Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness. ¹²"If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³"And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man.

What did Jesus imply in verse 10?

- **Nicodemus SHOULD HAVE KNOWN** since he taught Scriptures.
- **The gospel in Old and New Testament is the same.**
- **v.12 – Nicodemus did not believe**
- **v.13 – He did not recognize Jesus whom the Scriptures spoke about**
- **All his religiosity, intelligence, scholarship were of no help whatsoever.**
- **v. 13 – What was Jesus credential?**
- **Jesus been to heaven. We have not been to heaven therefore we must trust Him with regards to heavenly matters.**