

Salvation Offered
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John 3:1-16

Opening Question: If you could have a one on one interview with Jesus, what would you ask Him?

Here's the BIG IDEA: Eternal life only comes by SPIRITUAL REBIRTH. Everyone who hasn't experienced that needs to know about it. Everyone who HAS experienced it needs to TELL THEM.

John 3:1-3 (ESV)

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- **Who was Nicodemus? What does this passage tell us in verse 1 and verse 10?**
- **Based on verses 1 and 10, what groups would Nicodemus have been a part of?** (7:45-50)
- **How did the Pharisees believe you received ETERNAL LIFE in Heaven with God?** (Note: This is good place to use a Bible dictionary/encyclopedia. There are three on-line at www.biblestudytools.com)
- **Did Nicodemus just stumble upon Jesus? What was his agenda (note "we")?**
- **Verse 2: Why did he come "by night?"**
- Verse 2: Nicodemus compliments Jesus: "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."
- Verse 2 might encourage the casual reader, but there is a problem. **What was correct and incorrect in what Nicodemus said regarding God?**
- Verse 3: Jesus wasted no time on pleasantries. Bluntly he says: "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
- **Why do you think he was so blunt?** (Ch. 2:25-35)
- **What was Nicodemus feeling about now? Why was he feeling this way?**

Richard Lenski wrote:

Spiritual birth is something one undergoes, not something he produces. As our efforts had nothing to do with our natural conception and birth, so in an analogous way but on a far higher plane, regeneration is not a work of ours. What a blow for Nicodemus! His being a Jew gave him no part in the kingdom; his being a Pharisee, esteemed holier than other people, availed him nothing; his membership in the Sanhedrin and his fame as one of its scribes went for nought. This Rabbi from Galilee calmly tells him that he is not yet in the kingdom! All on which he had built his hopes throughout a long arduous life here sank into ruin and became a little worthless heap of ashes. (The Interpretation of St.

John's Gospel [Reprint; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998], 234–35) MacArthur, John F (2006-03-01). John 1-11 MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Macarthur New Testament Commentary Serie) (p. 103). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- **What kind of people might be modern day, respectable, Nicodemus types running around today mistakenly thinking they have Heaven “in the bag?”**
- “Born again” is how most translations render it. The Greek word can also be translated “from above.” That gives us even more perspective...”unless one is born from above...” **How would you explain “born from above” to an unbeliever?**
- Nicodemus doesn't get it, so he asks Jesus a “Yeah, right!” question. Verse 4:

4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter 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 its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” 9 Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”

- Verses 5 and 6: Jesus introduces new terminology: “born of water and the Spirit.”
- **There has always been great debate among scholars on exactly what “born of water” means. R.C. Sproul says he's struggled with it for 40 years. Any ideas?**

Warren Wiersbe takes this view:

“To be “born of water” is to be born physically (“enter a second time into his mother's womb”) but to be born again means to be born of the Spirit. Just as there are two parents for physical birth, so there are two “parents” for spiritual birth: the Spirit of God (John 3:5) and the Word of God (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23–25). The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and, when the sinner believes, imparts the life of God.” Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Jn 3:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- Verse 7: Jesus is surprised Nicodemus doesn't get this.

The Prophet Ezekiel wrote: (Ezekiel 36:25–28) (ESV)

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

- A Pharisee like Nicodemus would have studied that before. Yet he didn't get it.
- Nicodemus knew a lot! But, it's not WHAT we know it's WHO we know.

John MacArthur points out:

“Jesus was telling him that entrance to God’s salvation was not a matter of adding something to all his efforts, not topping off his religious devotion, but rather canceling everything and starting all over again...If spiritual rebirth, like physical rebirth, was impossible from a human standpoint, then where did that leave this self-righteous Pharisee?”

MacArthur, John F (2006-03-01). John 1-11 MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Serie) (p. 104). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- **Verse 8: What metaphor does Jesus use? Any idea what it means?**
- **What point is Jesus making comparing Spiritual birth to the wind?**
- **Where does the wind come from? How do you control it? How do you know where it’s been?**

I may KNOW about wind, but have I felt the wind? Applying this to the Christian’s life: Have I experienced the “wind” of the Holy Spirit? Has it REARRANGED anything in my life? Does the “landscape” of my life look different because the Holy Spirit has blown into my life?

It’s called the “new birth” because it’s not fixing up the “old” creation...it’s making a NEW creation. That is done by the Spirit of God. As we just read in Ezekiel God said: “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

- Verse 9: Nicodemus still wasn’t connecting the dots: “How can these things be?”

10 Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

- Then Jesus makes it obvious He doesn’t just have the power of God. He IS God:

13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

- Verse 14: Jesus refers to an incident in Numbers 21 (v. 4–9). **Remember that story?**
- **What do you think Jesus meant that “the Son of Man (must) be lifted up?**
- We end this lesson on the most famous scripture of all time: John 3:16

16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

To receive this “new birth,” to become a “new creation,” there had to be a SACRIFICE in our place...there had to be a SAVIOR. That SAVIOR is God’s only Son, Jesus.

To “believe in him” means to “look to Jesus” as the ONLY source of salvation. It’s not about what we know, it’s WHO we know.

Did Nicodemus ever “get it?” This passage doesn’t indicate that Nicodemus was converted that evening. If you’ve studied the book of John before, you know the rest of the story about Nicodemus and Jesus. What DO we know about how Nicodemus responded to Christ? (John 7:50–52, 19:38–39)

So, What’s the Takeaway?

Sinclair Ferguson writes:

A lady once asked George Whitefield why he so often insisted on preaching on ..."You must be born again." Whitefield replied, "Because, Madam, you must." The simple truth is that there is no other way into the kingdom. The only way in is by the one thing we need and can never do for ourselves: new birth. God alone can do it.

Sinclair Ferguson. In Christ Alone: Living the Gospel Centered Life (Kindle Locations 1054-1056). Kindle Edition.

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