

Series: Great Gospel Invitations
"You Must be Born Again" # 10
John 3:1-13
3-27-18 Sun AM

This text is probably the most famous and most important "interview" in history because in it we discover the core of salvation, **the new birth and the deity of Jesus**.

Today I want to explain this passage around three questions Nicodemus asked Jesus:

I. How do you enter the kingdom of God [vs. 1-3]?

vs. 1-2: "There was a man"

You say, "Wait a minute, that question is not in vs. 2-3. Jesus read His thoughts. Jesus knew was in the heart of Nicodemus.

He was a Pharisee (separated ones) and member of the Sanhedrin (71 men) who were over the religious practices of Israel, the Supreme Court. So Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews.

The Pharisees were a religious party of men who followed the Mosaic Law and added legalistic interpretations to it. They added their own oral traditions and Jesus often exposed their hypocrisy.

They did not deny Jesus worked miracles, but if he was not stopped, the Romans would consider His following as an insurrection and the Romans would destroy the temple and their positions of power.

v. 2a: "The same came to Jesus by night"

Nicodemus was a seeker who was moving toward faith and later believed as his friend Joseph of Arimathea. Each time he is referred to as, "He that came to Jesus by night."

Why by night? The most popular view is that as a ruler of the Jews he did not want the persecution from the other Pharisees, to be openly associated with Jesus.

Note two fatal flaws in his theology [v. 2b].

1. "Teacher come from God" and not God come to teach.
2. "God be with him" not God Himself. He was God in a body not a representative of God.

We learn a truth here: It is possible to be religious and yet on your way to hell. With all his sincerity and religion, Jesus looked Nicodemus in the eye and said, "You must be born again." Jesus had to tell this outstanding religious man, that he was going to hell if he was not born again.

v. 3: Jesus answers, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"

The word "again" means "from above or spiritual birth." Nicodemus needed a spiritual birth from above (see v. 12). "Born again" used three times in the N.T. twice here, v.3, 7 and I Peter 1:23.

Nicodemus did not need external rules and works, but he needed inner spiritual transformation, regeneration by the Holy Spirit. He needed eternal life planted within him.

C. I. Scofield says, "The natural man is blind and dead to spiritual truth. It is impossible to enter heaven; for he cannot obey, understand, nor please God."

1 Corinthians 2:14, But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 8:7-8 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Note the second question...

II. How can a man be born when he is old [vs. 4-8]?

v. 4: Nicodemus had no clue what Jesus was talking about. He thought Jesus was talking about being born twice physically.

v. 5: What does "born of water and of the Spirit" mean? Different views...

(1). Does not mean John's baptism, Christian baptism, nor Human birth.

(2). This means Regeneration by the Spirit or the cleansing by the Spirit through the Word of God.

Ezekiel 36:25-26, Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you [cleansing and forgiveness] (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." [regeneration] (27) I will place My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My statutes and carefully observe My ordinances. [indwelling and obedience]

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; water is not baptism or physical birth.

Let me give you further proof of this view-

1. The context of 3:6-8- Wind and the spirit are the same Greek word, *pneuma*, which means breath or pneumonia.

In creation everything is after its kind- flesh begets flesh and Spirit begets spirit. The wind can't be controlled and is invisible but the effects of the wind can be seen and witnessed. The proof of the Spirit's work can be seen and evidenced.

Q- What is regeneration or the new birth?

1. Regeneration is the act of God alone, in which He quickens the human heart that was dead to God and gives spiritual birth.

2. Regeneration is necessary because of Adam's fall and our subsequent fallen condition or inherited sin.
3. Regeneration is a gift of God's grace and is an immediate supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in us.
4. Regeneration changes the disposition of our souls, inclining our hearts toward God. The fruit of regeneration is faith that works.

Next, we see the third question...

III. How can these things be [vs. 9-13]?

vs. 9-12: Jesus rebuked Nicodemus, the teacher, for not knowing the OT Scriptures [Ezek. 36:25-26] that taught of a new birth by the Spirit.

In the Greek we have a definite article "**the**" which means Nicodemus was **the** known master-teacher in Israel. The nation was in bad shape spiritually if its best teacher could not comprehend this spiritual truth.

v. 13: Why is Jesus the only way? Only Jesus had His permanent abode in heaven prior to His incarnation and therefore, only He has the true knowledge regarding salvation and heavenly things.