

## Born from Above

**John 3:1-15** Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 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.”

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again 2 he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

**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.<sup>3</sup> **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?”

**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? **13** No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.<sup>7</sup> **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.

### **For God So Loved the World (John 3:16-21)**

**16** “For God loved the world so much, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. **19** And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, because his works would be exposed. **21** But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

### Additional Scriptures

**John 2:23-25** Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

**John 20:31** “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

**Numbers 21:4-9** From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses, d “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and <sup>e</sup>we loathe this worthless food.” then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he takes away the serpents from us.” So, Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” So, Moses made a bronze<sup>3</sup> serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

In this lesson on John 3:1-15 will discuss **1). How Jesus embraces us as we seek Him.**

- 2) The meaning of being born again**
- 3) The work of the Spirit in our spirits and lives**
- 4) How a story in the old testament points to Christ saving us.**

## **Jesus Embraces us as we Seek - revealing our darkness and shining light in our lives**

In his conversation with Nicodemus Jesus embraces the seeker (v. 1-4). Nicodemus was a teacher and well known so he had no reason to come at night but, he did go in secret. He was a seeker. He wanted to know more. In his curiosity, his seeking and maybe even pride that he did not want anyone else to know he had not figured it out, Nicodemus came to meet with Jesus at night. Some think he came then because he did not want the leaders who were against Jesus to know. It is also at night, when the business of the day is done, that we have time to think and visit. Our true needs and often relationship need become more apparent. At this time, Nicodemus could ask Jesus what was on his heart and mind. He could be sure that his questions were heard and that Christ would answer them honestly and fully without the concern of how the presence of others would affect them. If there were disciples there, they would also have learned that God honors our questions and seeking, and answers us satisfactorily.

We don't have any way of knowing for sure what Nicodemus' motivation was, but Jesus did know Nicodemus's motives and Jesus knew His own motives. Earlier in his book, the author John used the term darkness as something we are in if we do not know or receive truth. In believing things that are not true, we do things that go against His love. When we know about and receive the truth and the abundant life He offers, His life, His truth replaces the lies we believe. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Nicodemus coming in the darkness could have signified that he did not know the truth, and or that he had questions. Maybe he did not know how to do and be what he wanted to do and be. However, he was willing to go and find out who Jesus was and ask Him for the truth.

We also know Jesus' motive was to shine the light of His truth, the truth to know God. In John 6:29 it says, "Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." The purpose of John's book is stated later on in chapter 20 verse 31 "that you may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"

Jesus welcomed Nicodemus into his presence and He welcomes us into his presence. Some of you may be coming to Jesus in secret, in the dark, not wanting others to know you are looking for some answers. But you are looking for something that you will find in Jesus. Many have come in the dark, in secret, not willing to be public with their questions or searching. A couple was praying for their son to come to know Christ, to become more honest and to know the truth. The son would not go to church but he was listening to the sermons online. He was in the dark, in secret, in hope looking for something in life. Jesus wants you to come with your darkness and your questions. There was a man who had been in church many times but did not know that God loved Him and that He could accept Christ into His heart, know Him personally and have God as father, Jesus as brother and the Holy Spirit dwelling in His heart and mind.

The darkness is also our sin. Jesus knew Nicodemus' heart and He knows your heart just as intimately. He knows where you are, what your desires are, what you are longing for and what you need. He will shine the light of His truth to you and to your heart.

### **The meaning of being Born Again**

Nicodemus had religion but needed a right relationship with God and a spiritual regeneration of his heart would give that and right relationship with others. Jesus responded to Nicodemus' question with the words, "Truly, truly"— emphasizing the truth of what he needed. Nicodemus was dumbfounded. The term born again is a common term to us. Even people who do not follow God have an understanding of that concept and will talk about it. A sports announcer talking about a famous player who had not been doing well and the announcer said that his career was almost dead, but it had been born again, meaning it was revived. When Jesus used it, it was a new term. The miracle of a little baby being born can't happen again for a grown man. If I told my mother I need to be born again she would not be excited. The term in the Greek is *anōthen* it means to be "born again" or "born from above". Jesus had a much deeper use for it. He doesn't tell Nicodemus what he needs to do, He tells him what has to happen. When a baby is conceived and develops in the womb and is born, the child, the baby does not have a say in that.

We come to God and God gives us faith and helps our faith to develop. We can say a prayer telling Him we want forgiveness and Him to come in and live in us and love us. This is just the beginning of our eternity. Our baby spirit then needs to be fed by the Word of God, Clothed in His attributes, communicated with by prayer and conversation with other believers, nurtured by someone that will disciple us and help us learn to worship and serve and love others.

Jesus said that unless one is born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. When He uses the term water and he talks about the Spirit. The Bible says that when we accept Him and His Spirit that then we will have the Holy Spirit.

**John 4:14** says “but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

**Matthew 4:4** Man shall not live **on bread alone** but **on every word** that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

**John 6:35** Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

**John 7:37-39** says “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

He says here that if we are not born of the Spirit we won't see and we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. The Bible talks about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven and it is worth learning more about what this means. It is a place of loving and serving God, knowing God as Father and King and having relationship and access to Him and His family now and for all eternity. It is a place of encountering and overcoming sin and knowing and doing what is right and good, of having an abundant life. It is knowing you are a child of God because you have allowed Him to adopt you and you have adopted Him and His ways.

The flesh is used to talk about physical bodies but it is also used to talk about the struggle with sin and what is not loving in our relationships. If someone tries to live a good life without reckoning with sin, finding and accepting grace, mercy and truth to be healed from and to overcome it, then we do not enter into this relationship and kingdom. You can put lipstick on a pig but it is still a pig. If we have not dealt with the flesh, our fallen nature, sin in us, and let God work in and soften our hearts it just covers over the problem. We cannot find solutions on our own. Being born of the spirit is a supernatural work of God in us and in our heart.

### **The Holy Spirit's Work: Jesus explains something about the Spirit (v. 5-13)**

In Greek, which is the language the New Testament was originally written in, the word wind is similar to or the same as Spirit. Nicodemus would have gotten the connection between the two words. We don't do the work but listen and watch the Holy Spirit and He lets us participate. When the Spirit is moving someone's heart and they come to ask what God's word says or means, it has nothing to do with them. When we are watching leaves dance across the yard, we do not think of it as a miracle (although it is) but know it is the wind. Matt S. is planting one of the first evangelical churches in Norway where the gospel is not known. There was a group of Christians there that had formed and they were praying for a Shepherd to come and speak. It is far away from where he was planting his church, but two of the men wanted to go to seminary so they could be trained to be pastors and shepherds or lead people with God's love. Matt had nothing to do with it. It is the Spirit.

I long to see more stories of how the Spirit of God is moving. Please pray for God to work in these supernatural ways for others to know Him as well as yourself. Nicodemus was a leader and teacher and had no idea

In **Ezekiel 36:26-27** God said, <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Truly, truly we speak of what we do not know. If I speak of earthly things and you do not know, how can I tell you, how can you understand the heavenly things. You need to let Him into your heart and listen to His Word and the Holy Spirit. In Daniel 7 it talks of “the son of Man” who we will come before one day for judgment. Jesus is the Son of Man. When the son of man tells us something, we need to pay attention. It does not matter what you prefer but it is His Word on the matter.

Jesus uses the illustration of the wind to highlight two truths:

1. Just as the wind is beyond our control, so too is the movement of God's Spirit. “The Spirit grants new life sovereignly and unexpectedly, producing new life where humans least expect it to occur. New life comes not from human effort or human accomplishment but from the miraculous work of God's Spirit.”  
– Thomas Schreiner

2. Like the wind, while we cannot see the Spirit, but we can discern the evidence of his presence. See the Ezekiel verse above about the Spirit does is give us new hearts – taking the hardness from us, renewing & refreshing us, giving us a softer heart.)

**The story of the snake points to Him** - verses v. 14-15 in John reference the story in the book of Numbers in the Bible. When there were poisonous snakes biting the people of Israel, God told Moses to put a bronze snake up on a pole. Those who looked up at it were healed. This foreshadows or points to Jesus being put up on a tree and when we look to Him, we will be saved and find healing.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** God caused the one who didn't know sin to be sin for our sake so that through him we could become the righteousness of God in Him. John 3:15 tells us that Whoever believes will have eternal life. Nicodemus did not understand it then but did later. He took his body after he died and cared for it after Christ was crucified dead on the cross.

There was a man who went to a tribe of headhunters. He had to translate the Scriptures to their language. It was hard to find a word for "believe". When he had hunted with them all day, at the end of the day they came back and one of his friends said "It is good to stretch out and rest". That is what he used. We can stretch out and rest in God and His work and His love. Are you tired of working, of trying to gain God's approval? Will you come to the Holy Spirit? It is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Don't miss this opportunity to be saved, to come to Him and to stretch out and rest in God. Let Him make you born again! Give up your struggle, trusting in Him and His work for salvation. Stretch out and rest in your promise of grace and mercy. Let Your spirit come and well up with rivers of living water. To be born again then we can carry out the message and tell others the hope of the Word is Jesus.

**Benediction** Revelation 1:6 To Him who lives us and made us a kingdom and priests to/for God His Father, be glory and blessing forever and ever. Amen God Bless You.

### Questions

1. What is the difference between believing in God or Jesus just intellectually and being born again?
2. What are two ways this lesson defines darkness?
3. Do you have questions you have been afraid of or not willing to ask?
4. What darkness have you seen in your life that has been directed toward you?
5. What darkness have you participated in yourself?
6. Is there darkness you have brought to others? We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but it is by grace we have been saved. (Romans 3 & Romans 6)
7. Do you have sins and mistakes that you need forgiveness for that Christ provides?
8. What are some evidences of a person who's been born again?
9. What is being born of the water? If it is the physical birth Christ is making a contrast. The Holy Spirit, is living water and produces in us living water which cleanses, and provides new hearts and abundant life.
10. What is being born again, born of the Spirit, or born from above?
11. When a child is conceived there is a life there that was not there before. The child needs to be protected, nurtured, and provided for to develop in a healthy way. If we pray a prayer and invite God in but do not take care of and nurture the new life, the new Spirit He gives us then we do not develop or mature in our faith. To nurture the growth of our spirit we can compare some things.
  - A) The Word of God is Food (see Matthew 4 & John 6 listed above)
  - B) Prayer is communication with Him like a person needs communication to develop good relationships Matthew 5 is where Jesus taught us to pray.
  - C) Developing relationships with Him and those who believe/trust in Him and have become His children provides family and nurturing our Spirit needs.
  - D) Worship (music, adoration, service) helps us feel His presence and faithfulness. See Psalm 22:3 and Colossians 3:16
  - E) Service helps Psalm 100:2 Worship/Serve the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. But it is not just service alone – It is the relationship that grows as you serve.
12. Read v. 7. What's the significance of the word "must" here?
13. Why is the work of the Holy Spirit essential to being born again?
14. Read Numbers 21:4-9. They looked up for healing. As we look up to Christ who was put up on the tree, we will find healing and wholeness. [www.mecjailministry.com](http://www.mecjailministry.com) [mec@usfamily.net](mailto:mec@usfamily.net) 651-408-1300