



## Gospel of John 1-12

### Born Again

Continuing the theme of 'seeking faith' from John 2:23-25 a Pharisee named Nicodemus seeks out Jesus by night. He had seen the signs that Jesus did during the feast and wanted to know more.

**Introduction:** Nicodemus was a member of the elite religious party called the Pharisees. 'Pharisee' comes from a Hebrew word meaning to be 'separate.' They were an offshoot the Hasidim 'the pious ones' of the intertestamental period.

He was also a member of the Sanhedrin, the governing council of Israel. The Sanhedrin claimed their origin from the seventy elders who assisted Moses (*Num 11:16*).

Nicodemus defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin (*John 7:50-51*) and helped Joseph of Arimathea prepare Jesus body for burial (*John 19:38-39*)—actions that indicate the presence of genuine faith .

#### A. The Inquiry *John 3:1-3*

**1. A night visit:** Nicodemus did not want others to know he was talking to Jesus until he knew for sure who He was.

**2. We know:** The 'we' may mean that Nicodemus was representing other Pharisees in his quest. But he really did not know much about Jesus other than assuming He was somehow from God.

**3. You must be born again:** Jesus ignores what Nicodemus said and goes right to the issue of why He was here. To Nicodemus, you got into the kingdom of God by being a descendant of Abraham, observing the law and performing external rituals such as circumcision.

#### B. The Insight *John 3:4-8*

**1. Water and the Spirit:** [*5-7*] It is most likely that Jesus had in mind *Ezek 36:24-27* which Nicodemus would have been acquainted with. Against this Old Testament backdrop, Christ's point was unmistakable: Without the spiritual washing of the soul, a cleansing accomplished only by the Holy Spirit (*Titus 3:5*) through the Word of God (*Eph. 5:26*), no one can enter God's kingdom.

**2. The wind as an illustration:** The wind cannot be controlled; it blows where it wishes. And though its general direction can be known, where it comes from and where it is going cannot be precisely determined. Nevertheless, the wind's effects can be observed. The same is true of the work of the Spirit. His sovereign work of regeneration in the human heart can neither be controlled nor predicted. Yet its effects can be seen in the transformed lives of those who are born of the Spirit.

#### C. The Indictment *John 3:9-13*

**1. How can this be?** Jesus found it inexcusable that this prominent scholar was not familiar with the foundational new covenant teaching from the Old Testament regarding the only way of salvation *Ezek 36:24-27*. Nicodemus serves as an example of how external, legalistic religion obscures the revelation of God. Yet, Nicodemus continued to 'seek' the Messiah. And found Him.

## John 3:1-15 (NKJV)

**1** 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 and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, 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, "Most assuredly, 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 the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

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

**10** Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"

**11** Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.

**12** If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

**13** No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

**14** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

**15** that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

### C. The Indictment *John 3:9-13 (Continued)*

**2. We speak:** [:11] The 'we' here can be the 'We' of the trinity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The 'we' also could include John the Baptist and by extension all believers.

**3. I speak:** [:12-13] So who can really talk about heavenly matters? It can only be someone who has been there.

Jesus had just explained, by appealing to the earthly realities of childbirth and the wind, something of how the Spirit works in an earthly setting to bring about radical renewal. If Nicodemus (and, by implication, the associates he represented) balked at believing this "earthly" renewal, of what use would it be for Jesus to reveal even more profound truth?

This entire interchange suggests that the inability to believe great truths is rooted in the unwillingness to believe simpler truths nearer at hand.

### D. The Inspiration *John 3:14-15*

**1. Lifted up:** Belief in the Son of Man must extend beyond belief in His teaching, for in His teaching He claimed that what would happen to Him would provide the basis of salvation. In other words—Jesus **MUST** not only teach the truth but 'do the truth' and complete the work that His Father had sent Him to do.

So, the Son of Man would be lifted up and belief in this lifted-up Son of Man would bring life. Jesus appealed to the story in which Moses fashioned a bronze snake, fixed it on a pole, and lifted it up for any snakebite victim to look at ... and live (*see Numbers 21:4-9*).

To be lifted up, as Jesus understood it, had primary reference to being lifted up on the cross to die (*see John 12:31-34*). Those who seek life must look to the crucified One as God's only provision for salvation.

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