

- I) V1-8 INTRO: There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews
- II) We are about to look at one of the most important passages in the gospel of John
It contains the story of one man's quest for spiritual fulfillment: his name is Nicodemus
- III) IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: There are various terms used to describe personal salvation
We speak of regeneration, conversion, being saved, or being born again to describe it
Some people think evangelical Christians invented the term *born again*
Its origin is found here in this passage, and it is Jesus who actually coins the term
- IV) **BORN AGAIN:** Is used in V3, and V5
Later, the Apostle Peter used the term
1 Pe 1:23 having been *born again*, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever
- V) What did Jesus mean when He spoke of being born again
Being *born again* is speaking of a change of nature
Being born again is rooted in a commitment of faith in Jesus for salvation
- VI) Nicodemus came to Jesus to speak about spiritual matters
Jesus is about to share with him how to have a transformed life
- VII) V1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews
- VIII) **NICODEMUS:** Was a wealthy Jewish aristocrat as well as a member of the Sanhedrin
SANHEDRIN: The great council at Jerusalem, consisting of 71 members, (scribes, elders, prominent members of the high priestly families and the high priest, the president of the assembly). The most important causes were brought before this tribunal, as the Romans had left to it the power of trying such cases, and also of pronouncing sentence of death, with the limitation that a capital sentence pronounced by the Sanhedrin was not valid unless the Roman procurator confirmed it.
These men were commonly regarded as *rulers* among the Jews
- IX) **AS WE BEGIN:** We note first that there is an obvious contrast presented
ON ONE HAND: We have a wealthy religious aristocrat by the name of Nicodemus
From all *outside* appearances, Nicodemus appears to have everything under control
He is educated, religious, seasoned with age, respected, influential, and wealthy
- X) **ON THE OTHER HAND:** We have Jesus of Nazareth
He is uneducated by rabbinic standards, young, unknown, has a questionable pedigree, and is poor

- I) Under ordinary circumstances we would expect *Jesus* to be approaching Nicodemus
YET: The opposite is true
- II) V2 This man came to Jesus *by night* and said to Him Rabbi, we know that You are a
He had spiritual questions that he took directly to Jesus: This is very wise indeed
- III) Notice that he came to Jesus *by night*
Perhaps he simply did not want anybody to know: Other members of the council
Possibly he came at night out of courtesy: During the day, multitudes were with Him
Maybe it simply was the best time for him
He might have wanted more time to speak, and felt he could get this more time at night
- IV) I BELIEVE: There was an internal spiritual emptiness that was unrelenting
- V) V2 He said to Him *Rabbi*, we know that You are a teacher come from God
Rabbi: A title of respect, similar to a Doctor of Divinity often used as a courtesy
- VI) V2 *We know* that You are a teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that
Notice how he says *we know* that You are a teacher come from God
- VII) Nicodemus represents a group of people who have been drawn to Jesus by His works
Your signs have led us to this conclusion so I wanted to personally speak with You
- VIII) V3 Jesus answered and said to him Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is *born again*
Jesus went to the heart of the matter
- IX) If *you know* I am from God, then this is what He requires of you
THE FACT IS: *Knowledge* requires *action* and faith requires obedience
Jn 13:17 If you *know* these things, blessed are you if you *do* them.
- X) If you are not born again, you will never be able to see the kingdom of God
SEE: To know, to get knowledge of, understand, or perceive
If you are not born from above, you will never understand the ways of God
- XII) V4 Nicodemus said to Him How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a
This is an age-old question: How can a person change their ways and have a new life?
- XIII) THOUGHT: A man is the sum total of all of his yesterdays
Time, heredity, culture, personal dreams and experiences have all made me what I am!
- XIV) How can I change and become totally new, and different?

- I) V5-8 Jesus answered Most assuredly I say to you unless one is born of water and the Nicodemus, here is the answer: This is how you can be completely changed
You must be born of *water* and the *Spirit*
- II) **WATER:** Could speak of natural birth
The obvious point would be that to be born of the Spirit requires you to first be born!
- III) Natural birth speaks of a sinful nature: In Scripture, this is referred to as the flesh
1 Co 2:14 the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
- IV) **ALSO:** Born of water could be a backward glance at John's baptism
The key element of John's baptism was that it was a baptism of repentance
Mk 1:4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins
To be born again by the Spirit of God, one must first be born and then must repent
- V) Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God: *Period*
COMMENTS: Those born-againers think they are they only one's going to heaven!
We did not make this up: This is what *Jesus* said
- VI) **THE FACT IS:** Jesus taught us that this is how we enter into the Kingdom of God
- VII) Jesus said you must be born *again* (you need a *new heart* which produces a new life)
If you are not *born* from above, you cannot see the kingdom of God
- VIII) **Why?** Because before we come to Jesus, we are spiritually *dead*
Eph 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins
Eph 2:5 even when we were *dead in trespasses*, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)
- IX) V6-7 That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit
- X) If our lives are centered on pleasing our own fleshly desires, we will never enter heaven
Ro 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.
Ro 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- XI) Entrance into heaven is made possible through *regeneration*
Jas 1:18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

- I) V8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it but cannot tell where it
- II) Nicodemus, even the natural creation has mysteries you cannot understand
You do not actually see wind: you see only its manifestations
Those born of the Spirit have obvious evidence of an unseen power moving them
- III) You do not need external legalism, but a new power from above moving you to heaven
- IV) V9 NICODEMUS: Answered and said to Him "*How can these things be?*"
This concept of the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely new to his way of thinking
- V) As a teacher he taught his disciples conditions required for entrance into the kingdom
Keep God's commands, love Him, follow Him daily, do His will, pray, abstain from evil
- VI) What is this teaching Jesus is giving about being born again, being born of the Spirit?
- VII) V10 Jesus answered and said to Him Are you the teacher of Israel and do not know these
- VIII) NOTICE: Nicodemus is referred to as *the teacher* of Israel
He was a man of great standing yet being born of the Spirit is entirely novel to him
- IX) As a teacher he would be familiar with various passages of the Old Testament
Ezek 11:19-20 I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.
Joel 2:28 It will come about after this That I will *pour out My Spirit* on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.
- X) As a great teacher, he would have been aware of such promises
Though aware of such scriptures he did not yet understand what they spoke of
- XI) V11 Most assuredly I say to you We speak *what We know* and testify what *We have seen*
- XII) Nicodemus I am giving personal testimony of how you can enter into the kingdom of God
Jn 12:49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.
- XIII) KEY: This certain knowledge can be relied on: These statements are absolute fact
V11 YET: You *do not receive* our witness

- I) Even though you know I am a teacher come from God, still you reject My message
You do not receive our witness speaks of a regular habit of refusing His message:
- II) V12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe how will you believe if I tell
If you don't understand the basics how can you understand the advanced
- III) KEY: Being born again is the foundation for understanding Spiritual things
1 Co 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from
God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God
- IV) V13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is the Son
Man cannot *raise himself* to heaven that he might be able to understand its mysteries
Pr 30:4 Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in
His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the
earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?
- V) The mysteries of heaven are revealed to us by the One who is from Heaven: Jesus Christ
- VI) Who is in heaven may speak of Jesus being in Heaven when John wrote these words
- VII) V14-15 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man
When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they began to be discouraged
- VIII) As a result of their discouragement they began to grumble and complain
Nu 21:5-6 The people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us
up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul
loathes this worthless bread." So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit
the people; and many of the people of Israel died.
- V) When this occurred the people changed their minds and confessed their sin
Nu 21:7-9 Therefore 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 take away the serpents
from us." So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery
serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it,
shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent
had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.
- VI) WHAT SAVED THEM? Just looking at a serpent placed on a pole
They looked past the serpent to the One who was their salvation
RABBI: He who turned toward it was saved, not by what he saw, but by thee the Savior
of all

- I) Jesus will be lifted up on a cross: Those who look to Him in faith will live Spiritually
- II) V15 That whoever *believes in Him* should not perish but have *eternal life*
The purpose of Jesus' death was that it might give life to believers
This life will never cease, as it is age abiding life, and is the result of *faith* in Jesus (V36)
- III) V16 FOR GOD SO LOVED: The world that He gave His only begotten Son
 - a) Here is the cornerstone of Christianity: God so loved *the world* that He gave
 - 1) There is so much being said in this one verse
- IV) *FOR GOD*: Salvation is not by our works, but a gift from God and originates with God
 - a) The death of Jesus was not an afterthought, but actually part of God's plan to save us
 - 1) Rev 13:8 speaks of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world
 - 2) God is the One moving on our behalf, seeking out the lost and finding them
- V) *SO LOVED*: No sacrifice was too great to make: God gave Him for us because of love
The nails did not keep Jesus on the Cross: Love did
1 Jn 4:9-10 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.
- VI) *THE WORLD*:
God's love is for all and His desire is for all to be saved, though the majority refuse
Ro 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?
1 Ti 2:4 (God) desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth
- VII) *THAT HE GAVE*:
His love was not sentimental, or emotional but was a love that exacted a great cost
He gave that which was most dear to Him, His only begotten Son *whom He loves*
(V35)
The depth of love the Father has for the Son amplifies the costliness of the gift
- VIII) *HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON*:
Though He has children who became so by faith, there is only one begotten Son (1:14)
We are born again, and become His children when we believe in Jesus (1:12)
- IX) *THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM*: Should not perish but have everlasting life
Whoever is just that: whoever believes in Him
Salvation is offered to all, and is obtained by those who believe

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

- I) V17-18 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the God did not send Jesus to condemn, but to save those who would believe Him
The way to be saved is to believe what He has told you is true, to act on these things

- II) V19-21 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world and men Jesus came to illuminate the darkness and to save those who lived in it
Mt 4:16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.

- III) V19 MEN LOVED DARKNESS: Rather than the light because their deeds were evil
Even though the Lord loved them and would deliver them, they choose the darkness
The reason they perish is because they refuse to receive the salvation God sent to them

- IV) KEY: They reject God's love and forgiveness and refuse to believe
QUOTE: I decided that I would rather suffer with Socrates or Buddha or Ghandi or the countless other men and women whose noble lives have gone unremembered than dine at the table of the tyrant who torments them

- V) NOTICE: They *loved* darkness rather than light
They prefer the darkness because it is in darkness that they are most comfortable
Though there was light, still they refused to walk in it
They chose to walk in the darkness, that they might do the works of darkness
WHY? Because their deeds were evil

- VI) V20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his
These people love the darkness because it hides their sins

- VII) V21 ON THE OTHER HAND: Those who practice the truth are not afraid to be scrutinized
Their lives are lived in accordance to the Lord's will, and He blesses them
Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.