

Second Birth

Read John 3:1-21.

As a Jewish adult male living in Israel, Mosaic Law required Jesus to travel to Jerusalem three times a year to observe the convocational feasts. During the first Passover of His public ministry, Jesus made quite an impression at the Temple. Jews from all over the world were in Jerusalem for the feast.

In addition, Gentiles were present to watch Israel worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Those who had come to the house of Jesus' Father, Jew and Gentile alike, were being taken advantage of "by hook or by crook." The flagrant commercialism on and around the Temple Mount infuriated Jesus. Turning over the tables of merchants and money changers, Jesus caught everyone by surprise.

Imagine the scene. The thousands of pilgrims wanted to know who Jesus was, where He came from, and by whose authority He was doing these things.

Talking Points

- Following Jesus' temptations in the wilderness, He began collecting disciples from those following John the Baptist.
- While attending the first Passover of His public ministry, Jesus challenged the religious authorities at His Father's house, the Temple in Jerusalem. He drove the money changers and merchants away, creating anger, curiosity, and conversations.
- Nicodemus, a rabbi of significant influence, visited Jesus at night when no one would see him.
- Jesus told Nicodemus that unless he was born from above, a second birth, he had no place in the kingdom Jesus was introducing.
- During their conversation, Jesus declared Himself God and Savior using two Hebrew Bible / Old Testament passages. They are Daniel 7:13 (Son of Man) and Numbers 21:8-9 (Comparing Himself to the Raised Serpent).

Background

One of the curious observers was a man named Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a rabbi, the leader of a rabbinic school, and a member of the Sanhedrin. John 3:1-21 records the night-time conversation between Yeshua and Nicodemus.

Nicodemus recognized the miraculous deeds of Jesus and what He was saying as "coming from God." In response, Jesus answered, *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).*

Born Again?

Nicodemus was confused. "How can a man be born when he is old?" Like many of his time, Nicodemus reacted to Jesus' comment from his cultural worldview. As far as

Nicodemus was concerned, his physical birth (of water) as a Jew was sufficient to guarantee his entrance into God's coming kingdom. But what is Nicodemus' question about being "born again when he is old?" about?

Pharisaic Judaism taught that a man could be "born again" six times, four of which might apply to Nicodemus.

1. **Gentile Conversion** – A Gentile wishing to identify with Israel by following the practices of Judaism was said to have been "born again." Not applicable.
2. **Crowned as King** – If a Jew was crowned king, he was "born again." Not applicable.
3. **Male Adulthood Recognized** – At about 12 years of age, a boy was recognized as an adult in the synagogue. He was born again. Nicodemus qualified!
4. **Marriage** – We all know how marriage changes individuals. Married men were "born again" at marriage. Nicodemus qualified!
5. **Rabbinic Ordination** – If a young man completed his studies with a recognized rabbi, he received his ordination as a new rabbi. He was born again. Nicodemus qualified!
6. **Head of a Rabbinic School** – If a rabbi established a formal school to train rabbis, he was considered "born again." Nicodemus qualified!

Where Are You Coming From?

This information is interesting. It informs us concerning Nicodemus' question about being "born again when he is old." Everyone views what is around them and their place within it through their worldview.

Jesus met Nicodemus where he was and opened his mind and heart to something more, birth from above! In the next lesson, we will see Jesus meeting a woman with a different worldview. They both needed what Jesus offered. Both were "born from above" and changed forever.

Bible Conversations

- Explain how Nicodemus' worldview as a first-century Jew differs from yours. Is this information important to you? Why, or why not?
- How has Jesus answered the questions you are ashamed to ask in public?
- What do the people around you know about Jesus because they know you?