

The Word Made Flesh

Born Again

John 3:1–11

1. Nicodemus the Man

- **A Pharisee:** elite religious leader, expert in the Scriptures, morally upright, highly respected.
- **A Ruler:** member of the Sanhedrin, the most powerful Jewish council under Rome.
- **The Teacher of Israel:** the nation's top theological authority, the one others looked to for answers.
- **Outwardly qualified, inwardly empty:** if anyone “should” be right with God by human standards, it was Nicodemus.
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2. The Encounter with Jesus (John 3:1–11)

A. The Approach (vv. 1–2)

- Nicodemus comes at night, acknowledging Jesus as a teacher sent from God.

B. The Opening Statement (v. 3)

- Jesus immediately confronts him with the truth: **no one can see the kingdom unless he is born again.**

C. The Confusion (v. 4)

- Nicodemus misunderstands, thinking Jesus means a second physical birth.

D. The Explanation (vv. 5–6)

- Born of water and Spirit: physical birth is not enough; spiritual rebirth is necessary.

E. The Necessity (v. 7)

- Even the most moral and religious people must be born again.

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F. The Mystery (v. 8)

- The Spirit's work is invisible yet unmistakable, like the wind.

G. The Stunned Response (v. 9)

- Nicodemus asks, "How can these things be?"

H. The Rebuke (vv. 10–12)

- Jesus tells him that, as Israel's teacher, he should have known these truths from Scripture.

3. Three Implications of Being Born Again

A. Religious Activities Cannot Save You

- Nicodemus had rituals, devotion, sacrifice, and moral excellence, yet none of it made him right with God.
- Today's versions include church attendance, serving, "Christian habits," or moral behavior.
- These things are good, but they cannot impart spiritual life.
- Legacy culture: maturity must never outgrow humility.

B. Knowledge Cannot Save You

- Nicodemus knew Scripture better than anyone, yet still needed new birth.
- Biblical knowledge does not equal righteousness.
- Many grow in learning but never come to the truth because knowledge never becomes relationship.
- Scripture is meant to lead us to Christ, not replace Him.

C. To Live, We First Must Die

- The gospel is not self-improvement; it's self-crucifixion.
- Jesus calls us to daily cross-bearing and surrender of our will, desires, opinions, and sin.
- Paul says, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."
- Conversion is death to self and resurrection into new life.

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4. What Must We Do to Be Born Again? (John 3:12–15)

- Jesus points to **the bronze serpent** (Numbers 21): the people looked up and lived.
- Likewise, the Son of Man must be lifted up so that **whoever believes** in Him will have eternal life.
- Salvation is not earned, performed, or achieved.
- It is received by looking to Christ crucified.

5. John's Commentary on the Encounter (John 3:16–21)

- God loved the world and sent His Son not to condemn but to save.
- Belief removes condemnation; unbelief leaves a person condemned already.
- The light has come, but people prefer darkness because it hides their works.
- True faith comes into the light, revealing that our lives are God's work, not our own.

6. Signs You Are Born Again

A. Love for the Brethren – We know we have passed from death to life because we love God's people.

B. Love in Deed, Not Just Words – Genuine love shows itself in action and truth.

C. Hatred for Sin – The Spirit empowers us to put sin to death.

D. Cry of Adoption – Born-again hearts cry "Abba, Father," testifying to our new identity as God's children and heirs.