

John 3:1-21

Verse 1 - *A man of the Pharisees* – Separatists who exalted the law to the extreme.

A ruler of the Jews – A member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court of justice.

Verse 2 - *Came to him by night* – Nicodemus apparently did not want his brethren or the people to know that he was going to see Jesus.

Rabbi - A respectful title for teacher.

We know that You have come from God - There were some of the Pharisees who recognized Jesus' uniqueness

No one can do the signs that You do unless God is with him.

Later the Pharisees said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of demons". Matthew 12:24

Verse 3 - *Unless one is born again* – Spiritual birth or regeneration.

The kingdom of God – The Jew would understand this to be the millennial kingdom promised to Abraham and David.

Verse 4 - *How can a man be born when he is old?* Nicodemus may have had some sarcasm in his answer or may have simply not understand the spiritual aspects of the kingdom. He is clearly thinking of physical birth.

Verse 5 - *Unless one is born of water and the Spirit* - Literally "of water and \ Spirit"

This phrase has led to many interpretations:

1. Water baptism (ritual)
2. Physical birth – The embryonic fluid
3. The Word
4. The Holy Spirit – Of water, that is, the Spirit
5. A double metaphor for the Holy Spirit
6. The "water" refers to the repentance ministry of John the Baptist, and the "Spirit" refers to the Spirit's work of regeneration to the one who believes.

Verse 6 - *Born of flesh = flesh* – Natural Birth (this would parallel *water*)

Born of Spirit = Spirit – Supernatural Birth (this would parallel *Spirit*)

Perhaps this interprets verse 5 as referring to natural birth and spiritual birth.

Verse 7 - Do not marvel that I said to you (singular), 'You (plural) must be born again.' The change by Jesus from the singular pronoun to the plural pronoun may indicate that Nicodemus was representing the religious leaders and Jesus was making the point that everyone must be born again

Verse 8 - The analogy between wind and spiritual truth:

1. The sovereignty of the Spirit's operation – The wind blows where it wishes
2. The fruit of the Spirit– You hear the sound of it
3. The invisible and mysterious nature of the Spirit – You do not know where it comes from or where it is going

THE POINT – Those born of the Spirit are completely different from those who are only born of flesh, the unregenerate.

Verses 9-10 - *You are the teacher... and you do not understand these things?*

Nicodemus should have known Ezekiel 36:25-28 where God promises a new heart and Spirit to Israel.

Verses 11-12 - *We speak* – Perhaps a reference to the prophets or to the Godhead.

That which we know...that which we have seen – Jesus, being very God in the flesh, did know and had seen the things of God.

Earthly things – The new birth. If Nicodemus stumbled over the point of entry into the kingdom how would he understand the details of the kingdom.

Verse 13 - *No one has ascended into heaven* – No earthly teacher had ever ascended into heaven and returned to teach about heavenly things.

He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man – Only Jesus, The Son of Man of Daniel 7, had the authority to teach heavenly things!

Verse 14 - *As Moses lifted up the serpent...even so must the Son of Man be lifted Up* – Numbers 21:4-9 – Only those who believed God and looked on the bronze serpent lived! Today, only those who believe in Christ receive eternal life.

Verse 15 - *Eternal life* – This John's first reference to eternal life. It refers to the life of the age to come, both in the kingdom age and forever after. It is also a life that believers can experience in a measure before the kingdom begins.

This is eternal life, that they may know Thee... John 17:3

Verse 16 - This is the clearest expression of the gospel message in all of Scripture. The verse order is literally: *For so loved God the world that His Son, the only begotten, He gave that everyone who believes on Him Should not perish but have life eternal*

Three things God cannot do:

- 1 - He cannot love us any more than He does!
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...
- 2 - He could not have made our response any easier!
...that whosoever believes in Him
- 3 - He could not have given us a greater gift!
...should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Verse 17 - The world - Greek = kosmos, which stands for all mankind. Jesus' purpose was to save, not to judge. However, judgment is involved in salvation for the person who does not receive the free gift of eternal life is judged.

Verse 18

Belief = not judged

Unbelief = judgment

We are not judged eternally because of how sinful we are. Sin has been paid for on the cross!

We are judged because we do not believe.

Verses 19-20 - *The light* – Jesus is the Light of the World, particularly the light of the gospel.

Darkness – Spiritual blindness or sinfulness. People choose darkness over light because their deeds are evil. Immorality lies behind much unbelief. The light of Christ would expose their vanity of life.

Verse 21 - *He who practices the truth* – Those who adhere to truth are attracted to the Light.

That his deeds may be manifested – They do not try to cover up their deeds.

As having been wrought in God – They understand any good works they do are because of God's enablement.