

JOHN 3:1-12
NICK AT NIGHT!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 3 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

As you read and study the Bible, I am sure you have come across sections of the Bible, chapters of the Bible that you feel are very important.

And I am sure we can make a long list of chapters like that. You know me, every time we start a new book of the Bible, I say, ***“This is my favorite!”***

It is true, they all are but if there is one chapter of the Bible that is one of the most important ones in the entire Bible, I think John chapter 3 would be at the top!

Why is this such an important chapter?

Because Jesus is going to answer the most important question – ***“How does someone get into heaven?”***

And what is interesting is that, as we will see, a very religious Jewish man is going to be asking Jesus that question! His name is Nicodemus.

Make no mistake about it, in this chapter we see the love of God for sinful man. Understand that Jesus did not die for good people, He died for sinners, He died for you and me.

And to show this great love that God has for us, we see it manifested in action as Jesus reaches down and saves us!

As wonderful as that is, and it is very wonderful, there is a darker side as well. You see, man has a choice to make, to come to Jesus, to repent of their sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives or to reject Him.

As hard as that is to believe, man's heart can be so hard that they refuse to come to God, to receive that *FREE* gift of life that is only found in Jesus!

Remember the choice that John spoke of in John 1:12-13, "**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**"

You see, every person has a choice to make, to receive Jesus or reject Him and there are consequences to both.

To receive Jesus, you will spend eternity with Him and to reject Jesus you will spend an eternity apart from Him in the Lake of Fire. The choice seems obvious, but again, man's heart is bent on evil and thus, as we will be reading in a few weeks in John 3:19-21 for those who reject Jesus, "**And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.**"

Make no mistake about it, this is a choice that man has to make!

Now, Jesus goes on to say in John 3:21 for those who come to Him, "**But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.**"

That saving faith is manifested in the way we live out our lives.

So, this is a powerful chapter that deals with life and death. Life that is found in Christ and death that is found apart from Him. And, like I have said, man has a free-will to choose what he desires, life or death!

We are also going to be looking at this term “**born again.**” Tragically, it is a phrase that has lost its meaning, not because of what God has done but what man has done with that phrase. People use it and yet, when you look at the way that they are living, it does not add up. In other words, they are not living the truth, their deeds remain evil.

Now you may be taken back by that but let me show you what I mean. We are told,

I can still vividly recall the thrill I felt when I heard presidential candidate Jimmy Carter announce that he was born again. I was driving my car, and I gripped the steering wheel more firmly and thought, “Well, how about that!”

[Please understand that what Jimmy Carter says does not add up to him being a Christian. Yes, he used that phrase, but he is not living what he says he believes.]

Born again was a wonderful phrase to me then, an evangelical password.

But today . . . my response is not quite the same.

When I heard Larry Flynt, publisher of the pornographic magazine *Hustler* proclaim he was born again, I was less than enthusiastic. History has subsequently, I think verified my reserve since Flynt continues to publish his magazine preaching his own version of the situation ethic (“if it is love, it cannot be wrong”). He calls it “clean sex.”

A publication I saw included a letter to the editor from a woman who claimed she was a born-again Christian. She explained that along with being born again she had experienced an increased capacity to love and that she and her husband were now sexually expressing their love to others, specifically to their pastor and wife!

Along similar lines, another young woman claims she is “stripping for Jesus.” Her rationale is that since she has been born again, she has realized that the Lord has given her a beautiful body, and this is the best way to use her gift!

Jim Jones sometimes claimed to be born again, and yet he led hundreds to death and sorrow.

The January 21, 1980 issue of *Forbes* magazine carried a feature article entitled “Born-again Companies,” describing businesses that were experiencing new prosperity.

The *Los Angeles Times* has also printed an article on the sports page captioned “The Steeler Who Was Born Again,” about a player who had made a comeback.

And the Chicago Tribune once told about a starlet who was changing her image so she could become the sex symbol of the eighties. It mentioned incidentally that she was born again. A born-again sex symbol! How wonderful!

One of the greatest of all Biblical terms has been stolen, emptied of its meaning, and dragged through the mire so that today *born again* can mean almost anything or nothing!

John 3:1-8 relates our Lord’s classic conversation with Nicodemus, in which he explained what he meant by being born again. There we find the essentials, the nonnegotiables, of the born-again experience.

- R. Kent Hughes, John – That You May Believe, pp. 73-74

It is interesting to see that what God gives to us, what is good for us, Satan comes and twists, makes it into something that it is not and destroys lives.

My prayer as we go through this chapter is that you would clearly understand what it means to be born again and if a person is not born again, because there are those who say that they are Christians but that born again stuff is ridiculous, they are not saved!

So this is an important section for us to go through and understand! And like I have said, it is probably one of the most or the most important chapters in the Bible.

Spurgeon sums it up like this for us, *“If we were asked to read to a dying man who did not know the gospel, we should probably select this chapter as the most suitable one for such an occasion; and what is good for dying men is good for us all, for that is what we are; and how soon we may be actually at the gates of death, none of us can tell.”*

How true that is. It is not a matter of *IF* we will die, but really *WHEN* we die are we prepared to meet our Maker? Will we stand in our own righteousness, which is like filthy rags before Him or the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith?

Like I have said, we have a choice to make. To choose life in Christ or death apart from Him. I know I have said that already, but it is the most important decision you will ever make!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

Not only was Benjamin Franklin a great statesman and inventor, but he was also a great correspondent and received letters from famous people from all over the world.

One day he received what could well have been the most important letter ever to come to his desk. It was from the well-known British preacher George Whitefield.

“I find that you grow more and more famous in the learned world,” Whitefield wrote. “As you have made such progress in investigating the mysteries of electricity, I now humbly urge you to give diligent heed to the mystery of the new birth. It is a most important and interesting study and, when mastered, will richly repay you for your pains.”

The new birth is one of the key topics in John 3.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p.236

Exactly!

Let me set the stage for what is going on here in John chapter 3 because I believe it comes from what we concluded with last time in John 2:23-25, where we are told, **“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”**

You see, many people followed Jesus because of the miracles that He did but they did not commit their lives to Him. They liked the miracles; they were exciting to see but they were not followers of Jesus!

But, as we will see, this Jewish religious man, Nicodemus saw the miracles and it created a hunger in him to know more about this Man named Jesus and the doctrines that He taught!

As we are told,

Having seen the signs the Lord was doing, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews and a Pharisee, comes to Jesus by night to inquire further about spiritual things. Jesus reveals to him that one must be born again by the Holy Spirit to see the kingdom of God.

Several times in these verses it is said that whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish but will receive eternal life. John the Baptist comes back in this chapter and tells a gathered crowd that one must believe in the Son of God to have eternal life, otherwise the “wrath of God abides on him.”

- Elmer Towns, John, p. 27

So, the focus of most of this chapter is this Pharisee named Nicodemus and as we will see, he will come to Jesus at night.

Thus, I have called our study this morning, are you ready for it? *Nick at Night!*

For those of you who remember, that was a Nickelodeon name for the television shows that they had at night, but I am taking that name for our study. Sorry about that!

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into these main points.

They are,

NICODEMUS SEEKS JESUS – JOHN 3:1-2

JESUS ANSWERS NICODEMUS – JOHN 3:3

THE CONFUSION OF NICODEMUS – JOHN 3:4

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN – JOHN 3:5-8

MORE CONFUSION – JOHN 3:9

JESUS REPROVES NICODEMUS – JOHN 3:10-12

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study His Word and we look at this topic - *Nick at Night!*

JOHN 3

VERSES 1-2

Here we are introduced to a man named Nicodemus. And keep in mind that this is a Greek name that means "*victor over the people*" and it was a common name for Jewish men.

And as you look at this man, I think we see a representation of all men. In fact, he represented what we might say is "*the best of the best.*"

Notice what we are told of this man. Nicodemus was a religious man, a Pharisee. This group of men, the Pharisee's, numbed about 6,000 during Jesus' day, and they were very dedicated in keeping the Law and making or influencing others to do the same.

Ray Stedman gives us this insight of how dedicated they were, at least some of them tried to be. He wrote,

. . . each one [of the Pharisees had] taken a solemn vow before three witnesses that he would devote every moment of his entire life to obeying the Ten Commandments, as a way of pleasing God. The Pharisees took this very seriously.

As you know, the Ten Commandments speak about worshipping the true God and not having idols in your heart, honoring your father and mother, refraining from lying, adultery, and various other sins. The commandments are given in rather general terms.

In order to be specific it was felt necessary to define those terms and to spell out how they applied to certain situations, so there had grown up in Israel a group of people called the scribes, who were members of the Pharisees. These men spent their lives studying the Ten Commandments and applying them to situations of life so that the Pharisees could carry out these commands and thus obey God.

The scribes took their work very seriously. In fact, to demonstrate how seriously they took it, they had compiled a very thick book, which the Jews still have today, called the Mishnah, made up of sections devoted to applying the Ten Commandments to life.

In the Mishnah, the section on obeying the rule of not working on the Sabbath occupies twenty-four chapters. Besides that they have another book, the Talmud, which is made up of commentaries on the Mishnah. In the Talmud 156 pages are devoted to the Sabbath as it applied to life! We can see how serious the Pharisees were about keeping the Law. . . .

In their interpretation of the commandment forbidding work on the Sabbath the scribes decreed that any form of labor which a man engaged in to make his living was forbidden. For example, a farmer could tether his animals with a rope during the week, but he could not tie a knot on the Sabbath.

If a sailor tied knots in the course of his labors through the week that was fine, but he could not tie a knot on the Sabbath. Knot-tying was regarded as work - with, of course, certain exceptions. If it was absolutely necessary to life, one could tie a knot on the Sabbath.

Knots that could be tied with one hand were permitted, but not one that required two hands. A woman could tie a knot in her girdle or in a scarf that she tied around her neck. That was essential to women, therefore it was permitted.

So people began to look for loopholes in order to get around these laws. If a man needed to draw a bucket of water out of a deep well, he was not permitted to tie a rope onto the bucket because that would be violating the Sabbath; but if he tied the rope to a woman's girdle and then tied the girdle to the bucket, he could draw up water! These meticulous, narrow, rigid interpretations constituted the whole life of the Pharisees.

The Law said that mortar could not be made on the Sabbath for that would be work. The scribes said that if one spat on the ground on the Sabbath it would be making mortar, therefore spitting was forbidden. But if one spat on a rock there was no dirt involved, so one could spit on a rock on the Sabbath day but not on the ground. One had to take a good aim at the target!

The scribes limited the distance one could journey from one's home on the Sabbath day to a thousand yards. But people found ingenious ways to get around that. They tied a rope at the end of the street they lived on and that made the whole street their home, therefore they could journey a thousand yards beyond that.

If people traveled around their city during the six days before the Sabbath, planting caches [supplies] of food here and there so that they would have something to eat wherever they went, then they could call the whole city their home. Thus one could journey a thousand yards outside the city, but no further.

By these ingenious applications the Pharisees conducted their punctilious [meticulous] attempts to observe the Law and thus please God. That is the kind of man Nicodemus was.

- <https://bit.ly/3vMU68g>

Interesting that they tried to find loopholes in the Law so they could do what they wanted to do, and they also took the Law to unbiblical conclusions. Not a good thing. And, obviously, the Law was not meant to save man, it was to show man how far from God's standards he was and thus, it drew man to the Savior, to Jesus.

Now when we think of the term "*Pharisee*" with think of evil, hypocrisy, but not all of them were like that.

Nicodemus, like Saul of Tarsus, were very sincere in their desire to obey God, to keep the Law and live a life of separation from the pollution of the world! Think of it like many religious people today, they try to do good, to follow God but apart from Christ it will never happen!

And that is what the word "*Pharisee*" means, "*to separate.*"

So I believe that Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus was a sincere one, he wanted to know the truth, while many of the other Jewish religious leaders were not looking for the truth, they were trying to discredit Jesus before the people, which never happened even though they kept trying!

We are also told that he was a “**ruler of the Jews**” which probably meant he was a member of the elite seventy-member Jewish Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin. That means he was over the people, and it would have guaranteed him the highest regard and respect.

And in John chapter 19 we are told that Nicodemus was a wealthy man.

And if you think about it, we are no different today than Nicodemus was back then.

What do I mean by that?

You see, there are many people who are religious. That is, they believe they are okay with God because of what they are doing instead of who they know, Jesus! Good works saves them, at least that is what they believe!

Also, some are very influential, the who’s who of society, and they are their own god, in control of their own destiny instead of Jesus being their God. Power is the focus of their lives.

And then there are those who are rich, they have all the toy’s you could imagine and yet they are lacking the best gift, Jesus. They think the more you have the better you are and that is not true.

But here we see Nicodemus do something that I pray more people would do and we see that in verse 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.’**”

You see, he came to Jesus, which is always an important thing to do for the Lord said in Jeremiah 29:13, “**And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.**”

The thing is, why did he come to Jesus at night?

Some say he was afraid to come to Jesus during the day because he would be seen and that would not go well with the other Pharisees.

That is possible.

Another reason may be because of the crowds of people around Jesus during the day and he wanted to spend some time alone with Jesus.

I don't think you can be dogmatic about it, and it may be that both apply here in his decision to come to Jesus at night.

Now I want you to see that Nicodemus also recognizes that Jesus must be from God because of the miracles He was doing.

We see this played out for us in John 2:23-25, **“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”**

Jesus was the talk of the town because of the miracles that He did, the signs that were pointing to Him being the One, the Messiah!

Now this is important for us to understand because many are falling prey to these deceptions. Just because there is a miracle it does not mean it is from God.

I realize that may be hard to swallow but listen to what we are told in II Thessalonians 2:9, **“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.”**

You see, the Antichrist will do signs and wonders, but they will not draw people to Jesus, but to himself!

I think that the Lord dealt with this issue very clearly in Deuteronomy 13:1-5, where we read, **“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’ - which you have not known – ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.”**

I wonder how much deception would be going on in the church today if these guys were put to death for their actions by God! I think it would weed them out and stop them very quickly. You see, it is a serious issue that we need to be aware of today as people run here and there after this miracle, this apparition and-so-on.

If Satan and his demons can transform themselves into angles of light to deceive us, it is not time to be lackadaisical in our walk. You see, we have God’s Word which is our plum line to keep us straight, to keep us on track, to help us not to be deceived by Satan’s schemes. And we can see who this person is drawing us to, Jesus or themselves. Be careful!

So, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and recognizes that there is something special about Jesus. In other words – ***NICODEMUS SEEKS JESUS!***

Now, how will Jesus respond to what Nicodemus has said?

We don't have to guess. Look at the next verse and the next point – ***JESUS ANSWERS NICODEMUS!***

VERSE 3

Remember in John 2:24 we were told, “**But Jesus did not commit Himself to them . . .**”

But now He is committing Himself to Nicodemus, He is answering his question that Nicodemus had in his heart about the kingdom of God!

I think that Jesus sensed in Nicodemus a deep hunger, and also an emptiness, as I have said. Here was a man who was doing his best to obey what he thought God wanted, yet he had an empty and unsatisfied heart that led him to seek out Jesus by night, at the risk of the displeasure of his peers, to talk with him about the Kingdom of God.

Again, put yourself in the sandals of Nicodemus. You are a brilliant man, a keeper of the Law. You are very rich and influential. And you come to Jesus to maybe be encouraged on how good you are doing, and Jesus says that you are not going to see the Kingdom of God unless you are born again! That would hurt.

And that is what He was saying to Nicodemus, and again, that had to hurt Nicodemus.

The reality is, that these words should hurt anyone who thinks they will enter into the Kingdom of God by good works, keeping the Law!

Now what is this “**born again**” all about? What does Jesus mean by this? First of all, the Greek word “**again**,” ANOTHEN, can be translated “*from above*.” And that is the idea here.

Let me explain it like this. When Adam was created, he was created as an inferior trinity as compared to the Superior Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Man was created with a spirit, a soul or mind or consciousness, and a body with his soul or mind controlled by the spirit.

But, when Adam sinned it caused him and all his descendants after him, you and me, to be controlled by his body appetites, his spirit in a sense, is dead.

Thus, Jesus is saying that you need to be born again, your spirit needs to be resurrected in your life, to have control of your actions, and that can only come from above.

Thus, for Nicodemus and all men, they will not see, they will not understand, they will not know the Kingdom of God unless they come to Jesus and are born again!

One writer put it like this, *“To belong to the heavenly kingdom, one must be born into it.”* (Tenney)

Now, do we see this idea of being born again in the New Testament?

You bet we do.

“All over the New Testament this idea of rebirth, re-creation occurs.” (Barclay)

1 Peter speaks of being born anew by God’s great mercy (1 Peter 1:3)

1 Peter speaks of being born anew from an imperishable seed (1 Peter 1:22-23)

James speaks of God bringing us forth by the word of truth (James 1:18)

Titus speaks to us of the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5)

Romans speaks of dying with Jesus and rising anew (Romans 6:1-11)

1 Corinthians speaks of new believers as new-born babes (1 Corinthians 3:1-2)

2 Corinthians speaks of us being a new creation in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Galatians says that in Jesus we are a new creation (Galatians 6:15)

Ephesians says the new man is created after God in righteousness (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Hebrews says that at the beginning of our Christian life we are like children (Hebrews 5:12-14)

- William Barclay, The Gospel of John Volume 1, pp. 125-126

Now in the Jewish mind this idea of being “*born again*” was familiar. I am going to share several ways that they saw this term, what they said it meant and that will then lead us to the response of Nicodemus as we read on.

- *Gentile converting to Judaism*
- *Being crowned king*
- *Bar mitzvah (Jewish confirmation at age 13)*
- *Being married*
- *Being ordained a rabbi*
- *Becoming the head of a rabbinic academy*

The six ways of being born again in Pharisaic Judaism all had physical connotations. What Jesus did was give it a spiritual connotation in reference to spiritual rebirth. And what we are going to see as we read on is that Nicodemus is thinking physical rebirth, as we will see.

And the next point is simple – ***THE CONFUSION OF NICODEMUS!***

VERSE 4

This is an interesting response by Nicodemus because he doesn't say, “*Why in the world do I need to be born again? I keep the Law; I am a righteous man. I am a Pharisee!*”

That would be the typical response from these religious leaders.

But Nicodemus did not say that. And I believe that Nicodemus saw his weakness, his failure to reach up and touch God and he is seeking a way by which that relationship with God can be restored, that gulf between God and man can be bridged!

You see, the problem for Nicodemus is he is thinking physical while Jesus is speaking spiritual! Listen to how Jesus answers his question.

And I think it is very possible that Nicodemus was thinking along the lines of Pharisaic Judaism, and like I have said, there were six different ways of being born again, since he was a Pharisee.

Remember what they were,

- *Gentile converting to Judaism*
- *Being crowned king*
- *Bar mitzvah (Jewish confirmation at age 13)*
- *Being married*
- *Being ordained a rabbi*
- *Becoming the head of a rabbinic academy*

For Nicodemus he had four of the six ways fulfilled. The two that he did not were a Gentile converting to Judaism and being crowned a king.

Let me go through these and you will see what I mean.

When Gentiles were converted to Judaism, they were said to be born again! He was not a Gentile and thus, could not complete this. I don't think this was a issue for him.

Also, he was not qualified to be a king because he was not from the tribe of Judah, the house of David, the royal lineage. This may have troubled him some because he was from the tribe of Levi.

The other four ways he did qualify.

He was a Jewish boy that was bar mitzvahed at the age of thirteen and thus, he was said to be born again.

Also, he was married and yes, we are not told about his wife but if he was a member of the Sanhedrin he had to be married, and thus, he was born again.

Another way was to be a rabbi and since he was a Pharisee, he had to be ordained as a rabbi and thus, he was born again.

And the last way was to be the head of a rabbinic academy and in John 3:10 we are told that he was “**the teacher of Israel.**” The one who was the head of a rabbinical school was referred to as the teacher of Israel and thus, he was considered born again.

The point, then, is this: Nicodemus had undergone every process available in Judaism to be born again. There was no other way available in Judaism and so the only way he could see being born again at his age was to re-enter his mothers’ womb and start the process all over again.

Again, he is thinking physical and Jesus is speaking to him about spiritual matters and that brings us to the next point that Jesus is going to explain to Nicodemus, that – ***YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN!***

VERSES 5-8

This is what it is all about, and Jesus starts out by saying we must be “**born of water.**”

What does “**being born of water**” mean?

Some say it speaks of water baptism, but that is not a requirement for salvation.

Others say it speaks of the Word of God and we are washed and cleansed by the Word. As true as that is, that is not what Jesus is speaking of here.

I believe that He is speaking of physical birth. When a child is conceived in the womb they live in a bag of waters, the amniotic fluid that surrounds and protects the baby. Then, when it is time to be born, the bag of water breaks and the child is born.

Thus, this first birth is physical.

But there are two births necessary for salvation. And the second one is spiritual.

D. L. Moody put it like this. He wrote, *“Being born again . . . is not a reformation - is not a turning over a new leaf, as some call it, is not a making up your mind to simply lead better lives. They must be born of the Spirit, and then they will live according to the Spirit. Unless they do this, reformation will be worthless. To be born again does not merely mean a resolve to be better.”*

Exactly and this spiritual birth happens as you ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life, you are born again! It is as one person said, *“Born once, die twice; born twice, die once!”*

Now what he meant by that is simple. If you are born once, physical birth, you will die physically and you will also die in the second death as you are cast into eternity in the Lake of Fire at the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation chapter 20.

But, if you are born twice, physical birth and spiritual birth, then you will only die once, speaking of our physical death as Revelation 20:6 says, **“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”**

Spurgeon put it like this as he sums this up for us, *“A man may cast away many vices, forsake many lusts in which he indulged, and conquer evil habits, but no man in the world can make himself to be born of God; though he should struggle never so much, he could never accomplish what is beyond his power. And, mark you, if he could make himself to be born again, still he would not enter heaven, because there is another point in the condition which he would have violated - ‘unless a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”*

And here’s the thing. It doesn’t matter how good you think you are. It doesn’t matter how religious you are. You will not enter heaven apart from believing in Jesus Christ and that happens as we are born of the Spirit.

Now some may feel I am making a big thing about being born again. But I think Jesus is making a big deal about this because it is that important. Let me show you what I mean.

In John 3:3 we are told, **“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”**

In John 3:5 we are told, **“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’”**

And in John 3:7 Jesus said, **“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”**

Jesus is very clear on this, it is not just a suggestion, it is a command!

Again, look at John 3:7 once again as Jesus said, **“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”**

How do you think Nicodemus looked at this point?

I think he was shocked by what Jesus was saying and Jesus is telling him not to be shocked by this but receive it by faith even though you don't fully understand it.

And please understand, and I know I am repeating myself, but it is that important. If you want to spend eternity with the Lord, you must be born again, it is not an option, for Jesus says, **"You must be born again."**

Notice He didn't say *"You should"* or *"It is a good idea"* or *"Pretty please!"*

If you don't have Jesus, or if He doesn't have you, I should say, you are not born again, and you will not see the Kingdom of God!

And like I have said, this was a difficult thing for Nicodemus to fully understand and grasp, just as it is for us. Thus, Jesus gives us this illustration to help us and in it He is basically saying, *"You don't see the wind, you don't understand everything about the wind and yet you see its effects. The same is true with the birth of the spirit or being born again."*

Make no mistake about it, the work of the Holy Spirit is invisible and mysterious just like the blowing of the wind.

When we are physically born, there is not much of a mystery to it, we see what is happening.

But when we are born again, Jesus tells us that this is a mystery. Think about it. The Holy Spirit implants the Word of God into our hearts and then He nurtures it until faith is full grown and the person receives Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Also, once we are saved, no one knows when or how the Holy Spirit is going to work in our lives, but we do see the results! Just like the wind, we may not see it, but we see the effects of the wind blowing through our yards and so on.

The Holy Spirit is also transforming our lives into the image of Christ and we don't see the work that is being done on the inside, but we see the results manifested in our lives outwardly!

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17, "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**"

You see, we can't see the Spirit doing this, but we truly can see the effects of what the Spirit has done! And all who come to Jesus can experience this transformation in their lives!

So when someone says that they are a Christian but they are not into that born again stuff, are they really saved? According to Jesus, they are not!

One writer added this, "*[Jesus said,] 'Nicodemus, being born of the Spirit is like your experience with the wind. You can see the wind's effect, but not the wind itself.' With those who are born again, the effects of the Spirit are visible in their lives, even though the Spirit cannot be seen. One of the reasons we have not seen our country swept for Christ is that there has not been sufficient evidence of the Spirit in Christians' lives. In many cases 'salvation' is a bogus experience.*"

Listen to what Titus 1:16 tells us, "**They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.**"

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**They profess to know God [to recognize, perceive, and be acquainted with Him], but deny and disown and renounce Him by what they do; they are detestable and loathsome, unbelieving and disobedient and disloyal and rebellious, and [they are] unfit and worthless for good work (deed or enterprise) of any kind.**"

I think that is clear. We are not going to be perfect as Christians but if we are no different than we were a year ago, five years ago, or whatever, then is there evidence for your faith? James would tell us that there is no evidence for your faith!

Ray Stedman made this point, and I like what he has to say. He wrote, “I heard once of a Christian in England who was asked to sign a church guest register. He noticed that a number of guests had entered their degrees after their names. He wanted to put some letters after his name, but had never been to a university. So he wrote, ‘*John Smith, BA and MA.*’ Asked what the letters stood for, he said, ‘*John Smith, Born Again, and Marvelously Altered!*’”

(<https://bit.ly/3vMU68g>)

Amen to that!

As Nicodemus listens to all that Jesus is saying, listen to how Nicodemus responds to what Jesus just said – ***MORE CONFUSION!***

VERSE 9

As you look at the puzzlement of Nicodemus, he is wondering about what Jesus said, what is this process by which a person can be born again?

I think the problem for Nicodemus is that he is still thinking of working his way into heaven, as they thought the Law was teaching them, instead of receiving the gift by faith. ***“I have been keeping the Law and I am not good enough to get in? How can this be?”***

He made the requirements, the ones that he could do, to be born again, so how in the world can there be more. Again, he is thinking physical and not spiritual. Nicodemus did not see that. I think that is his line of thinking here.

I love the fact that Jesus does not give up on Nicodemus, because I think he was truly searching, he really wanted to know, and he was not just trying to bait Jesus to catch Him saying something that was wrong.

Thus, Jesus had to keep explaining and what we see here is – ***JESUS REPROVES NICODEMUS!***

VERSES 10-12

Here we see that Jesus rebukes him saying that he is this respected teacher in Israel, leading the people and yet he still does not know how to get into the Kingdom of God!

Ray Stedman put it like this,

It is Jesus' turn to be astonished now. He has spoken to a man who is the teacher of Israel, a man who has given his life to studying the Old Testament.

Jesus also knew that book. He knew that Isaiah had spoken about a new life from God; that Jeremiah had predicted a new creation that would be given; that Ezekiel had said that God would take out the old heart of stone and give a new heart of flesh.

All through the Old Testament there are statements about a new birth, a new beginning, a new creation, a new life that would come as a gift of God to those who would humbly, without pride, receive it as something they desperately needed.

So Jesus says to Nicodemus, “How can this be? How can you, a teacher of Israel, not know about these things?”

- <https://bit.ly/3vMU68g>

How could he have known these things?

Is Jesus being hard on him?

Not at all, you see the Old Testament spoke of these things and thus, being a religious leader, a teacher in Israel, he should have known them.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 we read **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**

The New Covenant that is based in the blood of Jesus and given to us by His Spirit, the new birth!

In fact, the Old Testament Scriptures point us to Jesus, as Psalm 40:7 tells us, **“Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me.’”**

So, he should have known these things.

And verse 11 is interesting because Jesus is speaking of His deity, that He is God. Morris tells us that Jesus *“makes it clear that He can speak authoritatively about things in heaven, though no one else can.”*

Why?

Because He was with the Father, He is God!

“In short, we have here the basis in Christ’s own words of the statement in the prologue that the Word was in the beginning with God, and became flesh to be a light to men.” (Dods)

And then in verse 12 we see that Jesus is telling Nicodemus that if he can’t get that $2 + 2 = 4$, the basics, then how in the world will he understand trigonometry?

You see, Jesus is giving to him the basics of entering heaven, this spiritual leader, and he is still having a hard time understanding it because he is in a box of man-made religious ideas that he is having a hard time getting out of and letting them go!

Many do the same today, they ignore the truths of God found in His Word and they want to believe what man has to say instead, and that is tragic because they will miss heaven!

Let me share this with you and you will see the foolishness to think that religion can save a person, only Jesus can!

We are told,

Imagine that one day you go swimming and jump into deep water. You find yourself in trouble. Drowning! You are dying, but you cannot save yourself because you do not know how to swim. You are hopeless and helpless. You need help. Someone approaches and yells, ‘Pull yourself together and save yourself! Come on, do it yourself!’ What a terrible thing to say to a drowning man.

A second person arrives on the scene and actually jumps into the water. He starts swimming. He says, 'Look at me. Learn how to swim and do the same. Then you will save yourself'. How ridiculous! There is no time for you to learn. In fact, a drowning man is absolutely incapable of learning anything.

Now a third person approaches. He dives into the pool, grabs you and drags you out of the water. You might resist Him, but out of compassion he saves you from death. Now, which one of these three people would you thank the most? Surely the third one.

Religion is like the first two people. By nature we are drowning in our sin. We are in a mess because of our separation from God. Religion tells us, 'Save yourself. Do this and that. Don't do this or that and you will be saved.'

Some religious leaders are seen as examples. Their followers are told that if they imitate their lifestyle, they will be saved. It is like the second person who jumps into the water.

But religion cannot save us. We are hopeless. The Bible says that we are incapable of saving ourselves. That is why we need someone to jump into the water of our life and get hold of us and save us from our sin. This is exactly what God has done. He has provided a way for sinners to be brought back to Him.

God came into this world in the Person of Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, He died as our perfect human substitute. He took the punishment that we deserve for our sin. He bridged the insurmountable chasm that separates us from God.

Left to ourselves we are lost. Only Jesus, the infinite Son of God, was able to take that infinite punishment in our place.

It is unwise to reject God's saving plan. What would you make of a drowning man who refuses the help of a lifeguard? When someone accepts Jesus' offer to save (by trusting in His death and resurrection), Jesus forgives their sin and grants them a place in Paradise.

- <https://bit.ly/3zQDj7o>

As we will see, Jesus is going to continue on teaching Nicodemus about what this new birth, being born again is all about. He is going to show Nicodemus that it is not physical birth that will save him, but a spiritual birth that is accomplished by the power of God and not the good works of man.

And I will leave you with this to think about, because this is what it is all about. Jesus said in John 3:16-17, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**

We have seen Nick at night as Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, and spiritually speaking he was also in darkness. But the light of God is going to shine upon Nicodemus and no longer will he be known as *Nick at night*, but as *Nick a child of God!*

I pray that if you don't know Jesus, if you are not born again, a child of God, that you would listen to what God is speaking to you this morning and repent of your sins and come to that saving faith in Jesus. Because ***“You must be born again!”***