

Divine Teacher

Portraits of Jesus: John 3

January 17, 2021

DAY 1: What does it mean to be born again?

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.
2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

1. Nicodemus was a man of wealth, prominence, and a Sanhedrim member. Why did he come to Jesus?

2. He came at night out of fear of being seen by his colleagues. He was jeopardizing his position in the ruling class because they already hated Jesus. Cancel culture was "alive and well" back then, as well.

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

3. The "kingdom of God" is the rule of God in the hearts of people.

"...see the kingdom..."

4. You cannot see the difference between what Jesus brings and what human nature brings. You will not see the glory of Christ, appreciate the grace of Christ or the sacrificial death of Christ *for you!*

5. To not see the kingdom of God is to **not participate** in it. It is not to enjoy its manifold blessings, abundance, wonders and joys. It is like standing outside the front gate of Disneyland, having heard about the wondrous rides, creative features, lively delights, and tasty food and yet enjoy none of it.

"...**born again**."

6. Gk. (*Anothen*). The Greek word can be translated either "*from above*" or "*again*."

a. When it is translated as "born from above" the meaning points to the **origin** of the new birth and the **author** of new birth—the Holy Spirit.

b. When it is translated as "born again" the meaning points to the **spiritual experience**, the transformation that has begun.

7. Nicodemus has no idea what a revolution of the person this is. It is so foundational that one can think of being born with a whole new life!

8. Think of the pieces of our lives that undergo transformation: our purpose, priorities, thinking, values, emotions, volition, inclinations, and desires all are undergoing transformation.

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Understanding being born again

John 3:4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

1. Nicodemus *hears* reborn. He cannot conceive how this could be physically possible. That illustrates the point Jesus is making. Jesus is speaking about spiritual realities which Nicodemus cannot see.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

2. You cannot enter the kingdom of God means you cannot be a citizen. You won't even want to.

3. "Born of water and the Spirit" - The phrase, taken together explains **how** it happens. The spiritual cleansing of repentance, illustrated by water, and the power of the Holy Spirit to invade and live inside a human being. He begins to transform us.

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

"Flesh gives birth to flesh..."

4. This is the answer to the question Nicodemus asked in v. 4. Even if one could be born from his mother's womb a second time, the problem is the same. Fallen human nature ("the flesh") still gives birth to someone with a fallen nature.

"...but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

5. The Holy Spirit makes a person come spiritually alive to the things of God.

John 3:7 "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

6. How do we know if we've been born again? We should be able to see the effects of being born again. Jesus illustrates this truth with the wind.

7. We cannot see the wind itself, but we can see the *effects* of the wind. We can see it in the rustle of the trees, and feel it on our skin on a windy day. The effects of the Spirit's work are both visible and invisible, outward and inward. The inward effects include a change of heart, a change of attitude, a change in his values, a change in his priorities, a change in his inclinations, a change in his morals, and a change in his source of power for living.

8. The illustration reflects something of the incomprehensibility of the new birth. We will never completely understand the awesome change that is begun and will continue in the life of the believer.

9. What strikes you about being born again?

DAY 3: John 3:16

This is the most well-known verse in the bible. We'll take today to look into it.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

1. "...so..."

Gk. (outo). The *added* word, the *unnecessary* word adds wonder, and room to ponder such a vast kind of love.

2. "Loved"

Gk. (Agape). Self-sacrificing love. God's love is not a concept. It is not self-centered. It is not an "I'll love you if..." or "I'll love you as long as" It reaches out and draws people in. It is sacrificial. It pays dearly.

3. "...perish..."

The world was in a situation that was dire, in danger of eternal judgment, lost without hope of return, depravity without hope of restoration, darkness without light, deadness without real life.

4. "...that he gave..."

Why would anyone give rebels a *costly gift*? Why would anyone give rebels *their son*?

5. "...only begotten Son..."

Gk. (*Monogene*). "Mono" means one, and "gene" means born (John 1:14, 18; 3:18; 1 John 4:9).

a. The severe nature of our imperiled station is illustrated by the severe nature of the remedy. What was needed was not just turning over a new leaf, trying to be a better person, doing something for someone else. It wasn't a matter of being "religious." The matter was so serious that though we know that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Yet, no sacrificial lamb, no lamb out of the flock was sufficient to rectify and make right the awful predicament we made for ourselves.

b. And the severe nature of the remedy illustrates the severe nature of our perilous station. Sin must be atoned for. The only question is how. Either you will atone for your sin or you will accept God's stupendous offer of atonement for your sin.

6. "...whoever..."

The invitation for salvation, the offer of forgiveness includes everyone. There is no sin so heinous, no life so lost, and no failure so final to disqualify anyone from the invitation list.

7. "...believes..."

The mode of salvation is the simplest mode possible. There is no moral height to climb, no length of goodness to cover, no religious duties to perform, no sacrifice to complete. It involves believing that which should be most obvious: (1) I am a sinner, and (2) God loves and saves sinners.

8. "...perish..."

Gk. (*Apoletai*). We usually associate this word "perish" with physical death. But that usage is not the usage Jesus has in mind here. Perish refers to a person who has cut themselves off from the love of God and from the love of others. It is a final destiny of lifeless ruin in hell apart from God who is life, truth, and joy.

9. "...has eternal life."

The verb is present tense. When one comes to Christ for salvation, that eternal life begins at that moment. The shocking end of the gospel is not that we are saved from an eternity in hell. What is inconceivable is that we are granted a place in heaven!

10. What strikes you from John 3:16?

DAY 4: John 3:17-21

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

1. The gospel is a rescue mission. That is why Jesus came to the world.
2. Mankind already stands in a condition of guilt and condemnation. That is his standing. His condition is similar to the criminal who has not only broken the law but is now doing time for his crime. His condition is behind bars, with no way out.
3. God has provided a remedy for guilty and condemned man, but man will not accept God's remedy. He will not "*believe in the name of God's one and only Son.*" He is similar to the criminal who has been offered a pardon from prison but will not accept the pardon because he refuses to admit he broke the law in the first place.

John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

4. The major motif in these verses is the contrast of light and darkness. What different usages of "light" are used these verses?
5. Light is a metaphor for truth and for Jesus.
6. What does John mean by "darkness"?
7. The problem is sin is worse than men did evil. What is the attitude of mankind toward darkness in v. 19?
8. What strikes you about light and darkness in these verses?
9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: God's rescue mission for rebels

John 3:31 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

³² *He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.*

³³ *The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful.*

³⁴ *For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.*

³⁵ *The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.*

³⁶ *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*

1. John creates an enormous contrast between Jesus and any other human being. List or underline every phrase or word that references Jesus as divine, and not just human.

2. "The one who comes from heaven is above all." He is above and unsullied by the fallen world, does not consider earth his home, and speaks of everything loftier, cleaner, wiser, and truer than all the foolishness that fallen man spouts and spews.

3. List the items that are true of human beings.

4. Man is *from* the earth (the fallen world), *belongs* to the earth (the earth is what he considers "home"), and *speaks* as one from the earth (speaks as a fallen, sinful human being would speak, the same mindset, purpose, priorities, attitudes, etc.).

5. In these verses, what is the attitude of unrepentant mankind toward Jesus?

John 3:34 "For the one whom God has sent..."

6. This truth is stated thirty-nine times in the Gospel of John.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

"...Shall not see life..."

7. Unbelief is not just a matter of ignorance. Ultimately it is because of willful ignorance. It finds its application in willful disobedience and rebellion.

"...for God's wrath remains on him."

8. Wrath is the instrument of "tough love." Wrath is the last resort to try and keep a person from utterly destroying themselves in this life and to avoid untold and unending misery in the next.

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?