

John 3:1-2 *Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

It could be that Nicodemus came at night because it would be easier to have a lengthy conversation with Jesus once the day's activities were over. ¹

Nicodemus was a man of high authority in the religious leadership of Israel, a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jewish people. The council of the Sanhedrin was similar to the present-day United States Senate. ²

- Jesus' miracles confirmed Him as Messiah and mediator of the new covenant. ¹
- Satan can perform incredibly clever tricks, but they are not true miracles. Satan cannot create something out of nothing. ²

Nicodemus wasn't confessing that Jesus was the Messiah or God incarnate, but he was sure that Jesus had been sent by God. ²

Rebirth

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

- The kingdom of God refers, in the final analysis, to heaven, the abode where the reign of God is made manifest. ²

"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." – George Whitefield to Ben Franklin ³

The term "born-again Christian" is really a redundancy, like speaking about "an unmarried bachelor". There's no such thing as a non-born again Christian or an unregenerate Christian. ²

John 3:5 *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*

"I have struggled with this text for more than forty years, ... by the reference to the Spirit; He was talking about being born from above, being born by the power of the Spirit. But I'm unsure what He meant by His reference to water." ²

regeneration *n* : the act whereby God changes us at the very root of our being so that we can believe ¹

John 3

Ezekiel 36:25-27a *Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you...*

Ezekiel 36:22-38 is the likeliest background for Jesus' teaching on the need to be born of water and the Spirit. In this text, Ezekiel refers to the cleansing that Israel would receive after going through the Babylonian exile. The people would be purified and receive new hearts that would obey the Lord. ¹

To be "born of water" is to be born physically ("enter a second time into his mother's womb"), but to be born again means to be born of the Spirit. Just as there are two parents for physical birth, so there are two "parents" for spiritual birth: the Spirit of God (John 3:5) and the Word of God (James 1:8). ³

John 3:7 *"Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'*

To paraphrase, He says to us, "You, all of you, except Me, must be born again to inherit eternal life." ¹

- Regeneration is a supernatural work; it is done from above by the immediate power of God, and it's something only God can do. You cannot cause yourself to be reborn. ²

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration, taught by some churches, says that God regenerates at baptism everyone to whom baptism is applied. ¹

- Baptism itself does not effect regeneration. ¹

Jesus was not teaching that the new birth comes through water baptism. ³

"By the Spirit of God we are formed again and made new men, though His manner of doing this be concealed from us." – John Calvin ¹

John 3:13 *"No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.*

- Having come from the presence of God in heaven, Jesus had authority to speak about eternal truths. ²

"Man's natural tendency is to flee from the presence of God and to have no affection for the biblical Christ. Therefore, if you have in your heart today any affection for Christ at all, it is because God the Holy Spirit in His sweetness, in His power, in His mercy, and in His grace has been to the cemetery of your soul and has raised you from the dead." ²

- Let us pray for the Spirit to do this work in our unsaved friends and family members, knowing that in His sovereignty He often responds to our prayers that He regenerate others. ¹

January 31, 2019 A.D.

The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up

John 3:14-15 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.”⁴

- Jesus’ message is very simple: He has come to earth to die and be raised, and all who believe on Him will receive eternal life.¹

“Just as they who looked on that serpent perished not by the serpent’s bites, so they who look in faith on Christ’s death are healed from the bites of sin.” – Augustine of Hippo¹

- When Jesus spoke of being lifted up like the bronze serpent, He was referring primarily not to his exaltation but to His crucifixion.²

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

Most commentators believe that verses 16-21 should not be in red, i.e., they were not spoken by Jesus but are rather John’s expanded commentary on Jesus’ meeting with Nicodemus.¹

God’s love is unfathomable because He loves the world even though it is corrupt and sinful. The teaching of God’s love for the world is remarkable.¹

- We cannot ascribe any part of salvation to our own merit and worthiness. Salvation, in both its initiation and completion is the work of our Creator alone.¹

Go’s love is so deep and so profound, He sent His only begotten Son. He did not love the world so much that He sent multiple saviors.²

- The question is not, “Why is there *only* one way?”, but “Why is there *even* one way.”²

God loved the people enough in all of this that while they were in the very act of killing His Son, He transferred the sins of His people to His Son and said: “If you’ll put your trust in Him, if you’ll confess your sins and believe in Him, if you’ll turn your gaze upon Jesus, you will not experience death.” – R. C Sproul²

- To reject Him as Savior is to put oneself under condemnation. That is the point of John 3:18.¹

Isaiah 45:22 *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

Isaiah 45:22 was the text used by an ill-prepared layman substituting for the absent preacher. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted January 6, 1850.³

Jesus and John the Baptist

- Jesus baptized people during this time (John 3:22, 26).²

John 3:27 *John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.”*

John was speaking here about the principle of vocation. The term *vocation* comes from the Latin word that means “to call”. Every talent and ability that we have has been given to us from God.²

- John was not perturbed by the increasing attention being given to Jesus.²

“Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious Master.” J. Hudson Taylor³

John compared Jesus to the bridegroom and himself only to the best man.³

As the bridegroom, Christ must occupy the prominent place, though John the Baptizer’s place as the friend was unique, and he vicariously participated in the joy of the bridegroom.⁴

John 3:30 *“He must increase, but I must decrease.”*

John was not putting forth a strategy he had devised.²

- The greater point is that one who is of the earth cannot have preeminence over One who has come from heaven.²

John 3:34 *“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.”*

So often we forget that the ground of the love of God for His people is the love that the Father has from eternity for His Son.²

John 3:36 *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*

- Eternal life becomes a present possession as soon as one believes.⁴
Eternal judgment is also a present experience for the unregenerate.¹

Either we trust Him or we reject Him. This is the only place in any of John’s epistles or his gospel that he uses the word *wrath*. (He uses it six times in the book of Revelation.)³

¹ *Tabletalk* magazine, February 2018, Robert Rothwell, pp. 38-55

² *John (St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary)*, R. C. Sproul, 2009, pp. 33-53

³ *Be Alive*, Warren W. Wiersbe, 1986, pp. 49-60

⁴ *New American Standard Bible*, Charles Caldwell Ryrie *study Bible*, 1995