

Born Again and never again John 3:1-21 FBC Canton Sunday am August 16, 2026

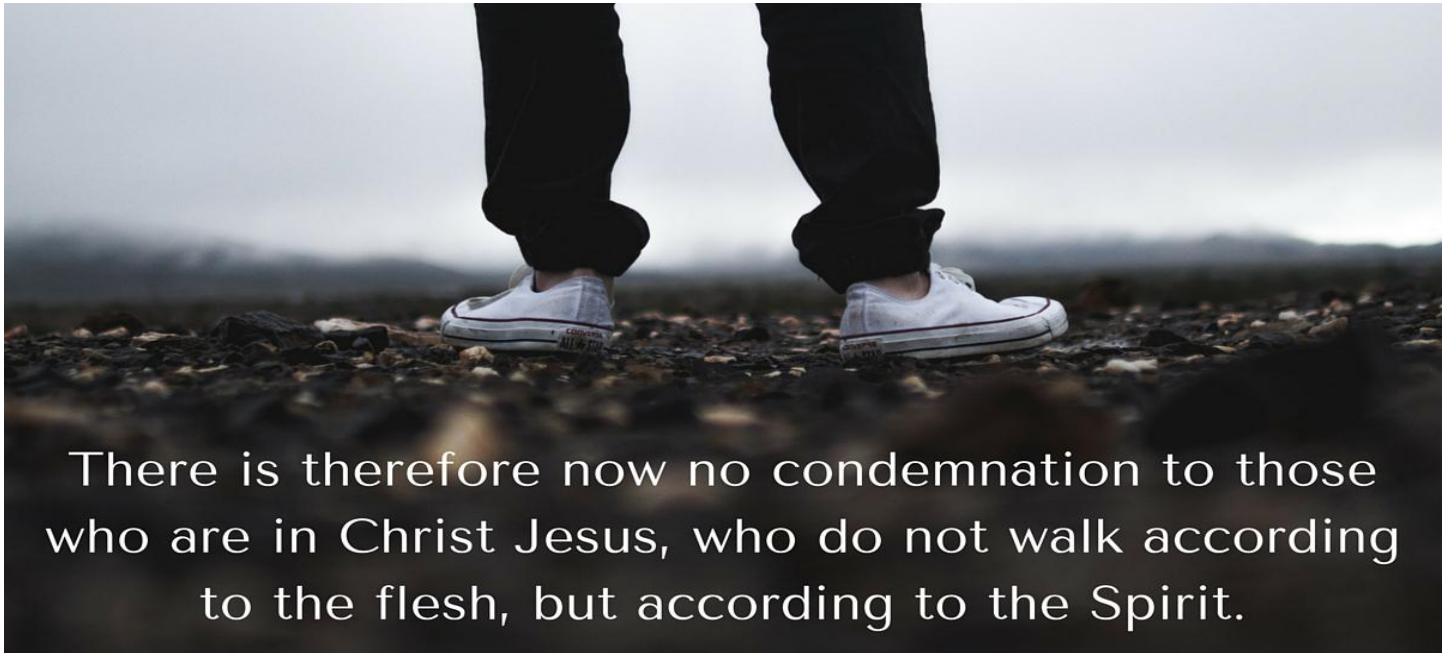
Introduction: Once you are born twice you will only die once. Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

DailyVerses.net

Combat doubt with scripture memory, never with feelings. Romans 8:1



There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Learn the difference between the tenses of salvation or you will be confused.

The Three Tenses of "Salvation"

Past Tense:

Separation from the *Penalty* of Sin

You have been saved.

Justification

1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5
Colossians 1:13, 14; Eph. 2:8, 9
Romans 5:1, 2; Colossians 2:13, 14

Present Tense:

Separation from the *Power* of Sin

You are being saved.

Sanctification

Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; 2 Cor. 5:17
2 Peter 3:17, 18; Romans 8:29
2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:16, 17

Future Tense:

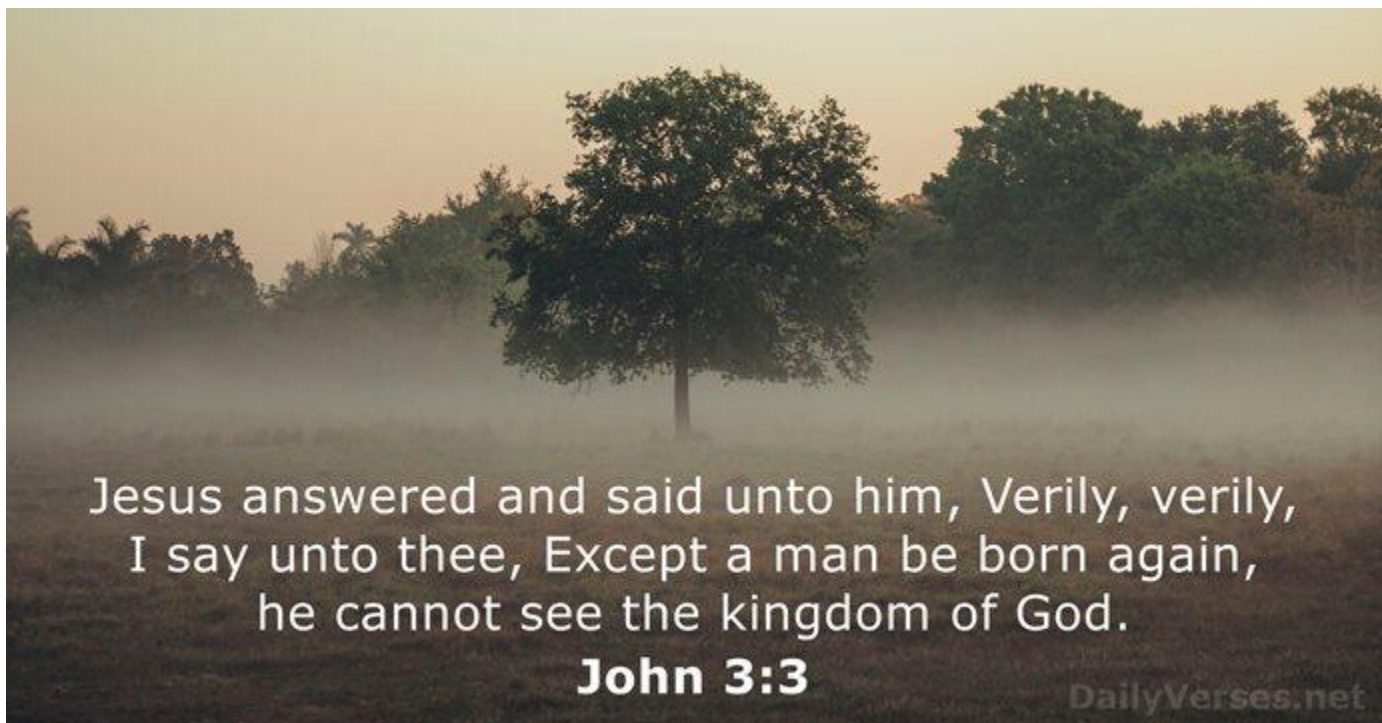
Separation from the *Presence* of Sin

You will be saved.

Glorification

Matthew 10:22; James 1:12
Hebrews 10:39; Revelation 2:10
Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:2

Everyone longs to see the Kingdom of God, but only those who are born again will!



I am praying for all of you who have struggled with assurance of salvation and the permanency of salvation to have that issued settled today.

I. Being born again begins with being drawn by the Spirit. V. 1-4, John 6:44-45

44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

a. How do we see the Spirit drawing religious Nicodemus?

Religion: man's attempt to be right with God. Depends on rituals and rites.

i. Religion kills, relationship is miraculous. V. 2

(No one can do these signs unless they come from God).

1. Pharisee=Separated ones, elevated ones above the common people.

a. Traditions of man, not the word of God.

i. Left them in fear-you-see.

b. Live for the approval of man=neurotic.

2. Ruler of the Jews: about temporal power.

a. Temporal power has to be enforced by threats and death=The book of Acts.

b. Atheism has killed:

1. Stalin: 10 million

2. Mao: 60 million

3. Hitler: 17 million

a. 6 million Jews.

i. 250k disabled.

c. Catholicism:

i. Crusades 1100 AD: 1-3 million.

ii. 1540 to 1570: 900k bible followers.

d. Islam: 15th-20th century: 13-15 million.

i. 2000-2020: 320k civilians.

b. Desire to be around Jesus and his people.

i. Came by night, disciples present.

c. Asking questions. V. 4, 9

i. Religion always questions relationship.

1. Makes statements because religion is not teachable. V. 2

2. Usually has to be directly confronted.

a. No one can see...v. 3

d. Under conviction. John 16:7-11

8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

i. No more words after verse 9

That is how you know you have been drawn by the Spirit.
If you are drawn by the Spirit then:

THIS IS A SPIRITUAL WORK...NOT OF OURSELVES LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST!

II. Be Born again by the Spirit. V. 5-16

Since salvation begins with the drawing of the Spirit, it cannot begin with works, it is God's work...that you must respond to in faith.

- a. No one is born again unless they are born first. V. 5-7**
- b. Everyone who is born again is born again by responding to the moving of the Spirit. V. 8-9**
- c. Receive the witness of the Word. V. 10-15**
 - i. The one who came from Heaven takes us to heaven. V. 13
 - ii. Jesus was lifted up to judge our sins. V. 14-15
- d. Belief is not intellectual is personal dependence. V. 16**
 - i. Belief is in from the heart, and spoken with the mouth. Romans 10:9-10**
 - 1. Perishing lasts forever because of refusal to believe.
 - 2. Everlasting life lasts forever.
 - ii. We are saved by His promise, not our performance.**

SINCE YOU DID NOTHING BUT RESPOND TO THE DRAWING OF THE SPIRIT, THEN YOU CAN DO NOTHING TO LOSE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF SALVATION!

III. Jesus wants you to be saved. V. 17-21

- a. He came because we were born condemned. Romans 3:23**
- b. Belief removes condemnation. V. 18, Romans 8:1**
 - i. People are condemned because they refuse the light and love the darkness. V. 19-21**

Conclusion: Born again people never need be born again...again! John 10: 28-29

And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

John 10:28-30 NKJV

Chuck Missler's Three Tenses of Salvation

Chuck Missler teaches that salvation is not a single event but a **three-tense process** — past, present, and future — each with a distinct stage in the Christian life www.enduringmercy.com+1.

1. Past Tense – Justification

This is the moment of **being saved** — positionally from the penalty of sin.

- Christ paid the ransom for all sin through His blood.
- It is received when a person **admits they are sinners in need, believes** in Jesus as the Only Begotten Son of God, and **confesses** Him as Lord of their life www.enduringmercy.com.
- Scripture: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith... not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”* (Eph. 2:8–9).
- This stage declares us “not guilty” before God, but it does not yet change our character or remove the power of sin.

2. Present Tense – Sanctification

This is **being saved** — operationally, from the power of sin — moment by moment.

- The Holy Spirit enters at the time of confession, giving us the power to resist sin.
- It is the ongoing process of growing in holiness, choosing not to sin, and conforming to Christ's image (Rom. 6; 2 Cor. 9:12).
- This is where we “work out our salvation” (Phil. 2:12) and where our faithfulness determines our position in the future kingdom www.enduringmercy.com+1.
- Missler notes that this is our time to determine our reward at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:11–15).

3. Future Tense – Glorification

This is **being saved** — from the presence of sin — after the resurrection.

- Often called **glorification** or the “redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23).
- We will be delivered from the presence of sin and fully conformed to Christ's image.
- This is the ultimate stage of salvation, when we are with God forever, free from sin's presence www.enduringmercy.com+1.

Eternal Security Context

Missler's three-tense view helps clarify the debate on eternal security:

- The Arminian denies that true believers are eternally secure.
- The Calvinist insists that if a believer does not persevere, they were never regenerate.
- Missler's position is that a true child of God is “obligated” to persevere (Rom. 8:12), but may fall short. If they do, they do not lose salvation but face divine discipline and lose rewards at the judgment seat Koinonia House+1.

In summary, Missler's three tenses — **justification, sanctification, glorification** — describe salvation as a progressive journey:

1. **Past** – Positional deliverance from sin's penalty.
2. **Present** – Operational deliverance from sin's power.
3. **Future** – Final deliverance from sin's presence.

Chuck Smith

Verse by Verse Study on John 3-4 (C2000)

Have we got a message for you tonight from the Word of God! John chapter 3 and 4, oh my, how rich! How blessed!

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews ([Jhn 3:1](#)).

We know a few things about him; we know that he must have been very wealthy, for he came with Joseph of Arimathea to embalm the body of Jesus after the crucifixion. And he brought these costly spices, about a hundred pounds, that only a very wealthy person could afford. A ruler of the Jews means that he was one of the seventy Sanhedrin, and, according to Jesus, he was a teacher of the Jews. He said, "Art thou a teacher of the Jews and knowest not these things?"

Finally, he was a Pharisee. The Pharisees numbered about six thousand men who had dedicated their entire life to keeping the codified law. They recognized that the first five chapters of the Old Testament were God's inspired Word to man. Now, the scribes had sought to interpret those first five books and their codifying of the law, and this was called the Mishna. Now, for instance, the law said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." But in the Mishna there were twenty-four chapters written to qualify what that meant. Now, God said it very simply, just, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And in six days you should do your labor, and the seventh day you shall rest and not do any labor on that day." But it took them twenty-four chapters to constitute what it meant and what the limitations and all were, the Mishna.

Now, the Pharisees sought to keep the whole Mishna, the codified law, or the explanations in the writings in the codified law. Now, on top of the Mishna, they then wrote the Talmud, which was a commentary on the Mishna. And so, the things just continued to expand and expand. But the Pharisee was one who sought, and the primary purpose of his life was the keeping of the codified law.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews:

He came to Jesus at night ([Jhn 3:2](#)),

Now, if anyone had it made by works or by the law, it would have been Nicodemus. If anyone could present their righteous credentials before God, it would be a Pharisee. They spent their entire life endeavoring to keep every aspect of God's holy law. If there were righteousness through the law, then the Pharisees surely would have achieved it. If a man could be righteous before God by his works, then surely the Pharisees would be accounted righteous. If there was anybody who didn't need to be born again, it would have been the Pharisees.

But though he was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a teacher, he was drawn to Jesus, much like perhaps that rich young ruler who came to Jesus and fell on his knees before Him and said, "Good Master, what must I do to have eternal life, or to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said, "Keep the commandments." And he said, "Which?" And as Jesus rattled off for him the first six commandments, or the second six actually, he said, "All of these have I kept for my youth, what lack I yet?" There was a realization that just the keeping of the law was not enough. There must be something more. Evidently, Nicodemus had this same awareness: there must be something more! Recognizing in Jesus a special quality, recognizing a special mission.

for he said to Jesus, Rabbi [Master], we know that thou art a teacher who has come from God ([Jhn 3:2](#)):

He recognized, though the other Pharisees did not recognize, he did recognize the divine authority by which Jesus spake. "We know that you are a teacher that has come from God,"

for no man can do these miracles which you do, except God be with him ([Jhn 3:2](#)).

So, he had made this acknowledgement and had this recognition that was not acknowledged by the other Pharisees. And yet was a tremendous witness and testimony to Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself called His disciples to believe because of the witness of His works. He said, "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake" ([John 14:11](#)). Again He said, "My works, they do testify of Me" ([John 5:36](#)). Nicodemus acknowledged this, "We know that You're a teacher come from God, because no man can do the miracles that You have done unless God was with him."

Now Jesus knew all things and He knew what was in the heart of Nicodemus and He knew foremost in the man's heart was, "How can I enter into this kingdom of God?" And so Jesus came directly to the issue that was upon the heart of Nicodemus, and He said unto him,

I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ([Jhn 3:3](#)).

Now Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said to His disciples, "Except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" ([Matthew 5:20](#)).

Now, as I said, the Pharisees spent their entire life endeavoring to keep the codified law of God, not just the Ten Commandments, but all of the Mishna, the codified law by which the Ten

Commandments were explained and amplified and interpreted. And yet, Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you're not going to enter the kingdom of heaven." Now He is saying to this Pharisee, the ruler of the Jews, "Unless a man is born again, he cannot enter, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

So Nicodemus said, How can a man be born again when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? And Jesus answered, Verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. For that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of Spirit is spirit ([Jhn 3:4-6](#)).

Now Nicodemus was interested in being born again, but the process, "How can it happen? There's no way that I can return to my mother's womb and be born again." And I do not believe that he was being facetious, I think that he was just really curious as to, "What do you mean, born again?" And then Jesus said, "Unless a man is born of the water and of the Spirit." Now, what does He mean water and Spirit? We know what it is to be born of the Spirit. What is He referring to being born of the water? There are those who declare that He is talking about water baptism. Unless you have been baptized in water, you're not going to see the kingdom of heaven, and that born of the water refers to water baptism.

I do not believe that Jesus is referring to water baptism here, because I believe that there are people who have gone through the ritual of water baptism who are not going to see the kingdom of heaven. It was only a ritual.

There are those who say the water refers to the Word of God. As Peter in his first epistle, chapter I, verse 23, said that we've been "begotten unto this living hope through the Word of truth." And so, we've been born again through the Word of God. And Jesus said in John 15, "Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." And so it is being born of the Word of God. And, the theological giants have taken their positions and there are those who say water baptism and those who say born through the Word God, and they write their commentaries and their ideas and thoughts and blast each other's ideas.

But, it would seem to me that being born of the water would be a reference to our natural birth, as the fetus is in that water sac being protected, and then there is the water bursting and the child is born. To be born of the water would refer to the natural birth, because in context then, Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which born of the Spirit is spirit." And so, He's talking about the two births: born of the water, and born of the Spirit. And that the born of the Spirit is referring to the new birth, the spiritual birth that we have, where born of the water would refer to the fleshly birth.

Now, I don't intend to make any brief for this position. If you want to believe that it refers to water baptism, you're welcome. If you want to believe that it is referring to being born by the Word of God,

you're welcome. And if you want to believe it is being born of the flesh, you're welcome. You can take whatever position you want and it's not going to alter your relationship with God one iota. But there are these positions that people take, and sometimes they get very argumentative with them, but I have no argument.

We do know that that which is born of the flesh is flesh. You were born once, naturally, of the flesh. You are not a child of God by natural birth, you are a child of God by the spiritual birth. Paul the apostle, talking about your life before Christ, said, "And you, hath He made alive, who were once dead in trespasses and sins; who in times past walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, that even now works in the children of disobedience: among whom you all once lived, according to the lust of your mind, and the lust of your flesh; and you were by nature the children of wrath" ([Ephesians 2:1-3](#)) Not the children of God, the children of wrath. It is only by a new birth that I become a child of God.

So that which is born of the flesh is flesh. A person apart from the new birth lives a life that is dominated by his fleshly desires. His body rules over his soul and spirit. In fact, his spirit is dead. That's what comes alive when a person is born again, the spiritual birth, that is when my spirit comes alive. Prior to that, I am living in the flesh and after the flesh, and my mind is dominated by the flesh, and thus, I have what the scripture terms *the mind of the flesh*, which is death. My chief concern is what I'm going to eat, what I'm going to drink, what I'm going to wear. My fleshly needs, my body needs. These are the things that occupy my mind.

But when a person is born of the Spirit, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Then, the spirit becomes alive and begins to rule within my life, and now my mind is occupied with the things of the Spirit, with how I might please God, in the worship of God, in the opening up of my life and my heart unto the things of God and of His Spirit, and these are the things that now dominate my mind. A mind dominated by the Spirit is called the mind of the Spirit, which is life and peace and joy.

So Jesus said,

Don't marvel when I said, you must be born again ([Jhn 3:7](#)).

The word *must*, again, is one of those words you've got to pay careful attention to, because there, you're coming to the heart of the issue when a person says, "I must." When God said, "You must," it is something you need to pay careful heed to, and He said, "You must be born again." There is no one who will enter the kingdom of heaven who is not born again. He's talking about if you want to come into the kingdom of heaven, you must be born again. You cannot come into the kingdom apart from being born again. God's divine imperative for any man who will come into the kingdom is that spiritual birth, you must be born the second time, born of the Spirit of God.

In the first chapter of the gospel of John we read, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born not of

blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" ([John 1:12-13](#)). Born again by the Spirit of God.

Now, the wind bloweth where it listeth, and you hear the sound thereof, but you cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit ([Jhn 3:8](#)).

There is that mysterious working of God's Spirit within our lives and we cannot fully comprehend it or understand it, we just know it. We can see the effects of it. My mother used to ask me when I was a child, "Can you see the wind?" And I said, "Oh, yes, I can see the wind." She said, "No, you can't." "Oh, yes, I can, I can see it out there. Look, it's blowing the dust." She said, "You're seeing the results of the wind. You don't see the wind." I can see the results of the Spirit. I believe it, I know that the Spirit exists. I have never seen Him, but I can feel His effect upon my life, it's very real. I can see His effects in the lives of those around me, it is very obvious. And so are they who are born of the Spirit, there is that mystic work of God's Spirit that I can recognize, I can feel, I can see that work of God's Spirit within me.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? ([Jhn 3:9](#))

Now, he has asked two questions. Number one: "How can a man be born again?" and then, "How can these things be?" Jesus doesn't immediately answer the question, but chides him now.

He said, Are you a teacher of Israel, and don't you know these things? Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am speaking of those things that I know, and I am testifying of those things that I have seen; and you do not receive my witness. If I have talked to you about earthly things, and you did not believe, how will you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? ([Jhn 3:10-12](#))

"If I can't bring to your understanding a faith in these earthly things, how can I ever elevate you to a higher place? You're a teacher, you ought to know these things?" Now He then turned and answered the question, "How can these things be? How can I be born again?" Having chided him for his not believing, not receiving the witness that Jesus said I know is true.

He then said to him,

For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up ([Jhn 3:14](#)).

Here Jesus is talking about His cross. Notice again the word must. "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." If there is to be the possibility of redemption, if there is to be an experience of being born again, it can only be by the Son of man being crucified, so must the Son of man be lifted up. He uses a very interesting example out of their history in the Old Testament found in Numbers 21, where the children of Israel, after their failure to enter into the land, and Moses began to take the route around towards Edom up through Moab and Ammon, coming into the land from the east, the people began to

murmur and complain against Moses, saying, "Why did you bring us into this wilderness to die, where there is no bread or water, and our souls loathe this manna? We're sick of it."

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people of Israel, and God sent these little serpents into the camp, fiery serpents, deadly serpents. They began to bite the people and the people began to die as a result of the bites. And they came to Moses and they said, "We have sinned against you and against the Lord by our murmuring. Pray unto God for us that we might be delivered from this plague of serpents." And Moses prayed unto the Lord and the Lord told him to make a serpent out of brass and to put it on a pole, and to stand it up in the middle of the camp. And it shall come to pass that whenever a man is bitten by one of these fiery serpents, if he will just look at the pole in the middle of the camp, he will be healed, he will live. And so Moses made a serpent of brass, put it on a pole, set it up in the middle of the camp; and it came to pass that whosoever was bitten by this serpent, when they looked upon that serpent on the pole, they were healed, they did not die. Therein you find the basis for that little symbol that the doctors use, the serpent on the pole, for healing. But brass in the scripture is always a metal that is symbolic of judgment, and the serpent is always symbolic of sin. So, the brass serpent on the pole was a symbol that God had judged their sins. And by looking at that, they were healed. They did not die.

Now, this is an interesting provision that God made, and by what process looking upon the serpent could save a person's life. You know, there's no physical or scientific explanation for this. It was just God's covenant! God's provision. And He said, "All you have to do is look and you will live." Now, I can imagine that there were some hard heads there in Israel, lying on the ground convulsing as a result of the snakebite, about to die. And their friends say, "Hey, in the middle of the camp Moses set up that pole of the brass serpent. Just look at it and you'll be healed." "Don't tell me that, man, that's ridiculous. I can't make sense out of that. How can looking at that do anything for me? Don't you see, I'm dying, man! I need help!" "Yah, but just look!" "Ah, come on, how can that help?" And I can see him arguing and dying because he can't understand how looking would help.

People are foolish. Unless they can understand all the processes by which God is working, they won't accept it. I can't explain to you how that believing in Jesus Christ can cleanse you of your sin and cause you to be born again and become a child of God. All I can tell you is it will. It works. That's what God has ordained. Jesus, hanging on the cross, was bearing the judgment of God for your sins. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we turn, everyone of us, to our own ways. And God has laid on Him the iniquities of us all" ([Isaiah 53:6](#)). "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up." And Jesus, hanging there on the cross, was there taking the judgment of God for sin, dying for our sins, dying in our place. And even as those in the days of Israel looked at the serpent and lived, so we, by looking at the cross in faith and in trusting in Jesus, live. We have eternal life. And so, it was quite an interesting parallel, symbolism that God had established.

How can a man be born again? How can these things be? They are the result of simply believing in Jesus Christ.

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life ([Jhn 3:15](#)).

God's provisions given to us through faith. Like the wind, you may see the effects, you may see the results and feel the effects; though it's a mystery, you can't tell whence it comes or where it's going, so is that man born of the Spirit. The process is of God's Spirit; we can't fully understand, we just know they exist.

How can a man be born again? How can these things be?

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ([Jhn 3:16](#)).

Again, the key is believing in Jesus. That's the provision that God has required for those to be born again. You are born again when you, by faith, believe in Jesus Christ, that He bore God's judgment for your sins in His death upon the cross, and you receive Him into your life. You are then born again by the Spirit of God and have become now a new creature in Jesus Christ, a son of God, a child of the King. Believing in Him, that is the key.

Then Jesus went on to declare to Nicodemus,

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved ([Jhn 3:17](#)).

I do not know why we always seem to picture Christ as condemning us. Well, I guess it's because we're so guilty all the time. But we always are thinking of Him in that posture of condemning. "You," you know, "you're doing it again!" And we're always thinking of Him in that posture of condemning. But Paul the apostle asked the rhetorical question in [Romans 8](#), "Who is he that condemneth?" And then he answers, "Not Jesus! For He died for us; ye, rather is risen again and is even at the right hand of the Father making intercession." God didn't send Him into the world to condemn the world. Jesus hasn't come to condemn you. Jesus has come to save you. "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." He didn't need to come to condemn, because the world is already condemned.

Now,

He that believeth in him is not condemned ([Jhn 3:18](#)):

Oh, did you hear that? Do you believe that? "He that believeth in Him is not condemned." What a glorious message of God's grace to us tonight! That ought to thrill your soul beyond measure! "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who believe in Jesus Christ" ([Romans 8:1](#)). Isn't that what it says? Do you believe it? Why is it that we are always going around condemning ourselves? Why is

it that we are always going around feeling so defeated and so discouraged, when there is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus? For he that believeth in Him is not condemned; however,

he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God ([Jhn 3:18](#)).

What is His name? Yeshua, the Lord is salvation. Jesus came to save. That's what His name implies. "Thou shalt call His name Yeshua, for He shall save His people from their sins" ([Matthew 1:21](#)). He didn't come to condemn, He came to save. His name implies His mission. Jesus declared it plainly. He said, "I have come to seek and to save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)). Now, "he that believeth not is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." And what is the condemnation?

that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be manifested. But he that doeth the truth comes to the light, that his deeds might be made manifested, that they are wrought in God ([Jhn 3:19-21](#)).

What is the condemnation? That men won't come to the light.

Now, God forbid, but if you will in the future, if you are standing with that throng in [Revelation 20](#) before the great white throne judgment of God, and the books are open, and you are to be judged out of the things written in the books; and when your name is finally called and you have to stand before God naked, open, and God opens the books and the indictment is made against you, there will only be one charge. There's not going to be going down the list of every lie you told or everything you stole or every wrong thought or action or deed you ever had. There's only going to be one indictment: your failure to come to Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the light of the world." Light has come into the world, but men won't come into the light, and that's why they are condemned. "He that believeth not is condemned already." You don't need that Jesus should condemn you, you're already condemned. He didn't come to condemn you. He didn't need to. You already are condemned. But now, the issue is not so much the evil that you have done, but your rejection of the provision, the only provision that God has made whereby men might come to Him. Whereby men might have the forgiveness of their sins. So, there will only be one indictment against man.

Jesus said when the Holy Spirit is come, He's going to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment. Of sin, because they didn't believe in Me. You see, that's the only sin that's going to damn your soul. Any other thing you may have done is forgiven. Christ died for the sins of the world. God laid upon Him the iniquities of us all. His death satisfied God completely for the sin of all humanity. There's only one charge and indictment that God will make against a man, his failure to come to the light, his failure to receive God's provision.

The Bible Says

John 3:14-16 Meaning

Now Jesus explains His reason for descending from heaven. The Son of Man, who will be given dominion over all, as stated in Daniel 7, will first redeem all of humanity. Jesus explains how, using an image that would have been familiar to any Jew. Jesus says:

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.

The next verse is John 3:16, which is arguably one of the most famous Bible verses. But John 3:16 is explained by John 3:14-15. Jesus tells Nicodemus that the same Son of Man Nicodemus would have expected to descend to earth in a cloud of glory and take dominion over the earth, as stated in Daniel 7, will first be lifted up on a pole (cross). The reason for His being lifted up on a pole (cross) is so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.

Jesus invokes an image from the Old Testament to explain how this will work. Moses lifted up the serpent on a pole when Israel wandered in the wilderness. The Israelites had been bitten by venomous snakes, and were dying. They cried out to God, and God told Moses to have Aaron fashion a bronze serpent and raise it up on a pole. Then, whoever had enough faith in Moses's words to look upon the bronze snake, hoping to be delivered from the effect of snake venom, they would have their life delivered from physical death (Numbers 21:4-9).

In the same way, Jesus is telling Nicodemus that He will be lifted up on a pole to deliver people from spiritual death. Everyone in the human race has the venomous poison of sin that separates us from God. Death is separation, so this is spiritual death. Without intervention, we will remain separated from God for eternity. But God has made provision in the person of Jesus. If we have enough faith to look on Jesus lifted up on the cross, hoping to be delivered from the sin that separates us from Him, then Jesus promises that we will have eternal life. Every sin of every human was nailed to that cross and born by Jesus (Colossians 2:14).

We aren't told any more about the reaction of Nicodemus. We are not told whether or not he believed. Perhaps because John wants us to put ourselves in his shoes, and let us know that we too must decide whether to have enough faith to look upon Jesus, hoping to be delivered from death. It seems likely that Nicodemus was being invited to follow Jesus, and become one of His disciples, and that he declined for the time then followed later. But what Nicodemus is hearing is an answer to a

longstanding dilemma among the Jews, explaining how the Messiah is both a suffering servant as well as a conquering king. There are many prophecies predicting each throughout scripture. Some Jews concluded that there would be two different Messiahs.

Now Jesus presents that One Messiah, who is God Himself, has come in the flesh as a human. The Messiah will be both a suffering servant as well as a conquering king. As a human [Son of Man](#), He will die for the sins of the world on a cross, being [lifted up](#), so that whoever has enough faith to look, hoping to be delivered, will be freely given the great gift of [eternal life](#). Later, as a divine [Son of Man](#), He will fulfill the prophecy of [Daniel 7](#), and have authority over all nations of the earth. He is the God—Man who will suffer and die for the sins of the world, then be raised to defeat death. He later will return as a conquering king, and rule the earth, and ultimately establish a new earth in which righteousness reigns ([2 Peter 3:13](#)).

Jesus asserts that believing on Him provides [eternal life](#) for any person who has enough faith to look upon the cross, hoping to be delivered from sin. The phrase [eternal life](#) is a translation of the Greek words "aionios zoe". The Greek word "aionios" means "to the age." The context determines what age, and whether the beginning or end of the age is being spoken of. The Greek word "zoe" refers to the quality, or fulfillment of life, rather than the mere presence of a pulse. "Eternal life" in this sense was something sought by Jews. This is made clear in the episode of the rich young ruler. That he is called a "ruler" likely meant he was of a similar station to Nicodemus. He asked Jesus:

"Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ([Mark 10:17](#)).

It is worth noting here that the young ruler called Jesus "Good Teacher." He seems to be eager to find out how to gain "eternal life" through something he can do. This is consistent with Jesus' use of the term "inherit" in Matthew:

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life" ([Matthew 19:29](#)).

In this passage in Matthew, Jesus makes clear that "eternal life" is a reward that anyone will "inherit" if they sacrifice for His name. This appears to be consistent with the common understanding and usage of these terms at the time.

The Mark account of the rich young ruler says Jesus "loved him" which seems to indicate that the young man truly sought to gain "eternal life" through his actions, and that his claim to have followed the commandments were likely genuine. At that point, Jesus told the young man he lacked only one thing, which was to sell all he had and follow Jesus.

This now raises a question, "In order to gain eternal life, do we simply have to have enough faith to believe, to look at Jesus on the cross, hoping for deliverance from sin, or do we also have to sell everything and follow Jesus?"

The Bible answers this dilemma by presenting "eternal life" as both a gift received by faith, as well as a prize or reward of experience, granted to those who walk in obedience to God and His commands. This is also made clear in Romans 2:7, which says God will grant "eternal life" as a reward to those who "by perseverance in doing good, seek for glory and honor and immortality" from God.

The new spiritual birth Jesus speaks of in John 3 is a beginning. It shows how to gain the presence of eternal life. It is the beginning of a new spiritual life. When we are born again, we have all that is needed to gain the greatest fulfillment of life ("aionios zoe"). We are like a newly born baby, that already has all their physical gifts embedded in their genes. What remains is to develop those gifts. Just as with our physical lives, the actual experience and reward of our physical life comes through the decisions we make, the application of our physical talents and opportunities. In this same way, eternal life is a gift as well as a reward. Being born again provides a new spiritual capacity to live a fulfilled life. Walking in faith and obedience to God's commands provides the full application of that spiritual life, resulting in the full experience of a fulfilled life.

Here in John 3:14-16, Jesus speaks of eternal life as a gift. This may have been disorienting to Nicodemus. Like the rich young ruler, he probably thought of eternal life as something to be gained by what we do. This is true in the sense that eternal life is a reward for obedience. But this is the case only for those who have gained the eyes to see and the capacity to enter the kingdom of God. And that capacity begins with being born again, as Jesus explained in verse 3. And being born again just requires enough faith to look on Jesus, hoping for deliverance from sin.

After telling Nicodemus that He, the "Son of Man" would be the cure for sin like the bronze snake in the wilderness was for snake venom, Jesus now gives the "why?" Why will the Son of Man be "lifted up"? Why will the Son of Man not skip this part, and just come to earth and redeem Israel, as most Israelites longed for. It is because of Love.

Jesus says 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. Now perhaps Nicodemus' head is about to explode, because suddenly Jesus discloses that He plans to die for the sins of the entire world. Jesus is deferring fulfillment of the Son of Man returning to earth to set up a kingdom for Israel, in order to save the entire world. This is bigger than Israel. It goes well beyond the world of the Jews. In that Jesus will die for the entire world, he will also die to save the Gentiles, even the despised

Romans. Because God does not just love Israel. God *so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.*

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You can access the original article here: [John 3:14-16 Meaning](#)

Chuck Smith

Sermon Notes for John 3:1-15

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN."

I. IT SAID TO ANYONE ELSE WOULDN'T MEAN SO MUCH.

- A. Thief on cross.
- B. Zacheus - Mary Magdalene.

II. WHAT IS A NEW BIRTH?

- A. Not a physical birth.
- B. "Educational."
- C. Not church membership.
- D. A divine change.
 - 1. Pig cleaned up (physical change).
 - 2. God has to do it from inside out.
 - a. "By grace are ye saved."
 - b. "With man impossible."

E. A complete change.

- 1. Drunk Victory over.
- 2. Gambler Power to quit.

III. WHY NECESSARY?

- A. Our nature requires it.
 - 1. Born in sin.
 - 2. Heart wicked.
- B. God's nature requires.
 - 1. Holiness.
- C. Work of Christ on cross requires it.
- 2. Shows no other way "if it be possible."
- D. God's word requires it.

IV. WHAT WILL IT DO?

- A. Take care of the past.
- B. Take care of the present.
- C. Take care of the future.

V. HOW CAN A MAN BE BORN AGAIN?

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN!"

I. DEFINITE COMMAND.

- A. Nicodemus "Pharisee" "Ruler."

II. WHY?

- A. Man's human nature sinful.
- B. God cannot look on sin.

III. WHO MUST BE BORN AGAIN?

- A. Everyone who hopes for eternal life.

1. I belong to the church.
 2. I pay my tithes.
 3. I read my Bible.
 4. I have been baptized.
- B. Christ said, "I am the way..."

IV. HOW?

A. Any man who is in Christ, new creature.

1. Caterpillar.
- B. Old things passed away.

1. Gambler.
2. Drunkard.

C. [John 3:16](#).

1. Jack Smythe.
- a. Australian gold seeker.

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The Bible Says John 3:1-8 Meaning

After Jesus has cleansed the temple and attended the Passover in Jerusalem, John now provides a discourse between Jesus and a Pharisee named [Nicodemus](#). This is early in Jesus' ministry, and is likely an opportunity for Nicodemus to become a disciple of Jesus, perhaps one of the twelve. John introduces Nicodemus, telling us *Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews*. The fact that Nicodemus was a Pharisee meant that he was highly educated in the Jewish Law, and presumably followed religious rules very closely, particularly the oral tradition of the Pharisees. John notes that Nicodemus is *a ruler of the Jews*, meaning he was a member of the Jewish ruling council, called the Sanhedrin. It had seventy one members, and heard the most important cases.

The Greek word "synedrion" appears twenty two times in the New Testament, and has been transliterated into the English pronunciation as "Sanhedrin." It was the Sanhedrin that condemned Jesus to death ([Mark 14:55](#)) as well as Stephen ([Acts 6:12](#)). In each case, the word "Council" is used as a translation of "synedrion." At the end of John's gospel, we learn that Nicodemus participated in the burial of Jesus and provided spices for his burial. We are not told whether he continued to be a member of the Sanhedrin at that time.

We are told that Joseph of Arimathea, in whose tomb Jesus was laid, was a secret disciple of Jesus, for fear of the Jews. It could be that Nicodemus was a disciple as well. This seems likely. Nicodemus would have been the best source from which to collect this episode, and would not have provided it had he not become a follower of Jesus.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He probably visited Jesus by night in order to avoid attention. As we will see, Nicodemus is intrigued, but has not believed. He seems to be trying to avoid incurring persecution for actually seeking understanding. Jesus will use the occasion to contrast those who seek the light and those who seek darkness.

Nicodemus said to Jesus, "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." Nicodemus makes an obvious statement, but one that many of the Pharisees either avoided or were unwilling to see. That was, very simply, that there was no explanation for the amazing signs or miracles Jesus had performed other than that they were the work of God. Nicodemus recognizes Jesus could not do such things unless God is with him.

Nicodemus opened his statement with a term of respect, calling Jesus Rabbi, which is "teacher." Jesus' credentials were often questioned by the authorities. But Nicodemus is at this point being respectful. He has not believed, but it appears he is genuinely seeking.

In a typical conversation, we would expect Jesus' response to include appreciation for the kind words of this highly ranked and prestigious person, and a return of pleasantries. But Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus starts with a pleasantry and gets a challenge in return. Nicodemus had said, "I see the work of God in what you do" and Jesus replied that the only way someone can see the kingdom of God is if they have been born again. Jesus is telling Nicodemus, "Actually, you are not seeing, because you are not born again."

Although Nicodemus has recognized that God is working through Jesus, he has not recognized that Jesus is the long-awaited King of the Jews, the Son of David. Not only that, Jesus is also the Son of God. Therefore Nicodemus has not recognized the kingdom of God, because he has not recognized the true identity of Jesus, the king of the kingdom. At this point Jesus focuses on what was required in Nicodemus in order for him to have eyes to actually see the things of God.

Nicodemus appears to be clueless of what Jesus is talking about, and said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Nicodemus took Jesus' statement about being born again in a physical sense, and asks how someone can go a second time into his mother's womb and be born a second time. But this is not at

all what Jesus is talking about. *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."*

Jesus started this conversation telling Nicodemus that being *born again* was a necessary condition to be able to "see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus had seen the work of God. But he did not recognize who Jesus was, so could not see the kingdom of God. Now Jesus makes clear that the second birth of which He speaks is a spiritual birth. The first birth, physical birth, is to be *born of water*. We know a baby is about to come when the mother's water breaks. The baby comes out wet with amniotic fluid. So the first birth necessary to be able to see the kingdom is to be born physically, to be *born of water*. The second birth that's necessary is to be *born* of *the Spirit*. Both are necessary in order to *enter in to the kingdom of God*.

Jesus continues to explain, saying, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*. Jesus makes clear that physical birth is a birth involving a physical body. The physical birth is of *flesh*, so is evidenced by *flesh*. We know a baby is born when we see its little body arrive. But the spiritual birth is a birth of the *Spirit*. It involves the *Spirit* of God bringing new life to the *spirit* of a human. The new life provides spiritual eyes to see the kingdom of God.

Apparently Nicodemus' mouth was gaping, or he was in some other way expressing amazement, because Jesus continues, saying *Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'* Jesus now provides an example from everyday life to help Nicodemus understand. Jesus says *The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit*. The Greek word translated *spirit* is "pneuma." "pneuma" also means "wind" or "breath." So literally, what Jesus said in explanation to being born of the Spirit ("pneuma") was that *the wind* ("pneuma") *blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from*.

When the *wind* ("pneuma") *blows*, we do not see it, but we still know it is blowing. We know because we see the trees sway, and the leaves move. But we do not see the wind. We *hear the sound of it*, but we do not see it. It *goes where it wishes*. We cannot control the wind ("pneuma").

In like manner, the Spirit ("pneuma") of God goes where it wishes. No one controls the Spirit of God. And, like the wind, we can see its impact everywhere ([Psalm 19](#)). But you do not see the Spirit ("pneuma"). The Spirit ("pneuma") comes upon people who are born again, and brings them a new birth. You can't see the Spirit ("pneuma"), and you can't see the rebirth. But when the Spirit ("pneuma") brings new birth to a person, it has an impact of giving them eyes to see spiritual things.

It could be that Jesus and Nicodemus were having this conversation in Hebrew. But if so, the effect of the double-meaning would have been the same, for the Hebrew word for Spirit is "ruah" and it also means "breath" or "wind."

Since Nicodemus is a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin, he would likely have known the Bible by heart, as well as the oral tradition. He was a learned man. Yet it appears he had never heard anything like this.

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You can access the original article here: [John 3:1-8 Meaning](#)

David Guzik

Study Guide for John 3

THE NEW BIRTH

"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." (Spurgeon)

A. Nicodemus and the new birth.

1. ([John 3:1-3](#)) Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night.

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 are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

a. **Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews**: Nicodemus was one of those impressed by Jesus' signs ([John 2:23](#)), and a member of the ruling Sanhedrin. He was religious (**of the Pharisees**), educated (**Nicodemus** is a Greek name), influential (**a ruler**), and earnest enough to come **by night**. Nicodemus came to Jesus as a representative of *all men* ([John 2:23-25](#)), and in a sense he represented what is highest and best in men.

b. **This man came to Jesus by night**: Perhaps Nicodemus came **by night** because he was timid, or perhaps he wanted an uninterrupted interview with Jesus.

c. **We know that You are a teacher come from God**: It is difficult to know if Nicodemus spoke of himself, of the Sanhedrin, or of popular opinion. “It is possible, however, that *oidamen*, *we know*, signifies no more than, *it is known, it is generally acknowledged* and *allowed*, that thou art a teacher come from God.” (Clarke)

d. **No one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him**: We understand the sense in which Nicodemus meant this, but his statement was not entirely true. The Bible tells us that deceivers and false prophets can sometimes perform remarkable signs ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](#) and [Revelation 13:13-14](#)).

e. **Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**: Jesus’ reply to Nicodemus shattered the Jewish assumption that their racial identity — their old birth — assured them a place in God’s Kingdom. Jesus made it plain that a man’s first birth does not assure him of the **kingdom**; only being **born again** gives this assurance.

i. It was taught widely among the Jews at that time that since they descended from Abraham, they were automatically assured of heaven. In fact, some Rabbis taught that Abraham stood watch at the gate of hell, just to make sure that none of his descendants accidentally wandered in there.

ii. Most Jews of that time looked for the Messiah to bring in a **new world**, in which Israel and the Jewish people would be pre-eminent. But Jesus came to bring **new life**, in which **He** would be preeminent.

iii. Nicodemus addressed Jesus as a **rabbi** and **teacher**; Jesus responded to him as the one who announced new life. “Our Lord replies, It is not **learning**, but **life** that is wanted for in the Messiah’s Kingdom; and **life** must begin by **birth**.” (Alford)

f. **Born again**: The ancient Greek word translated **again** (*anōthen*) can be also translated “from above.” This is the sense in which John used this word in [John 3:31](#) and in [John 19:11](#) and [19:23](#). Either way, the meaning is essentially the same. To be born **from above** is to be born again.

i. “The word rendered ‘anew’ might equally be translated by ‘from above’. Both senses are true, and in the Johannine manner it is likely that we should understand both here.” (Morris)

ii. Essentially, this means to **have new life**. A theological term for this is **regeneration**. It isn’t simply a moral or religious reform, but the bringing of new life. “To belong to the heavenly kingdom, one must be born into it.” (Tenney)

iii. Jesus clearly said that without this — that **unless one is born again** — he cannot enter or be part of (**see**) the **kingdom of God**. Moral or religious reform isn’t enough. One must be **born again**.

- iv. This isn't something that we can do to ourselves. If Jesus had said, "Unless you are washed, you cannot see the kingdom of God" then we might think, "I can wash myself." A man might wash himself; but he could never birth himself.
- v. "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](#)).

2. ([John 3:4](#)) Nicodemus answers: How can this be?

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

a. **How can a man be born when he is old?** Nicodemus' reply may not have been out of ignorance, but from thinking that Jesus meant a moral reformation. His question may be "How can you teach an old dog new tricks?" One way or another, Nicodemus clearly did not understand Jesus or the truth about the new birth.

i. "Had our Lord said: 'Every Gentile must be born again,' he would have understood." (Dods)

b. **How can a man be born when he is old?** In His description of new birth, Jesus recalled a familiar theme from Old Testament promises of the New Covenant ([Deuteronomy 30:1-6](#), [Jeremiah 23:1-8](#), [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#), [Jeremiah 32:37-41](#), [Ezekiel 11:16-20](#), [Ezekiel 36:16-28](#), [Ezekiel 37:11-14](#), [37:21-28](#)). These passages essentially made three promises in the New Covenant:

- The gathering of Israel.
- The cleansing and spiritual transformation of God's people.
- The reign of the Messiah over Israel and the whole world.

i. In Jesus' day, the common teaching among the Jewish people was that the first two aspects of the New Covenant had been fulfilled. They saw Israel gathered — at least in part

— after the Babylonian exile. They saw strong spiritual movements like the Pharisees, which they believed fulfilled the promise of spiritual transformation. All they waited for was the reign of the Messiah.

ii. That's why Jesus' statement about the new birth was so strange to Nicodemus.

He thought that the Jewish people already had it; they certainly weren't looking for it. They only looked for a triumphant Messiah.

3. (John 3:5-8) Jesus explains the new birth.

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

a. **Most assuredly... you must be born again**: Jesus was emphatic in saying that man does not need reformation, but a radical conversion by the Spirit of God. We must be **born of water and the Spirit**.

i. "In verse 3 Jesus has spoken of 'seeing' the kingdom of God, whereas here He speaks of 'entering' it. There is probably no great difference of meaning." (Morris)

ii. **Most assuredly**: "The words add solemnity to and underline the truth of what follows. The modern expressions, 'In truth I tell you', 'Believe me when I say', 'I do assure you', convey the meaning." (Tasker)

iii. **Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**: If a nation passed a law that said no one could live there except those who were born in that nation, and someone wanted to live there who was not born there:

- It wouldn't matter if he took a name that was common in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if he spoke the language.
- It wouldn't matter if he observed some of the customs.
- It wouldn't matter if he dressed like those in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if he practiced some of the religious traditions of that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if his parents were born in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if his children were born there.
- It wouldn't matter if he had many friends in that nation.

- All that would matter was if he was actually **born** there.

iv. “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.’” (Spurgeon)

b. **You must be born of water**: We know from [John 3:10](#) that whatever being **born of water** was, it should have been familiar to Nicodemus from the Old Testament.

i. Some have thought **born of water** means to be baptized. Water here may represent baptism, but there is no real Old Testament foundation for this.

ii. Some have thought that **born of water** refers to our physical birth, since we come forth from a sack of water. This approach is more attractive, but doesn't it simply state the obvious? However, it does make a good parallel with the idea of *that which is born of the flesh* in [John 3:6](#).

iii. Some have thought that **born of water** means to be born again by the Word of God. In other passages of Scripture, water represents the Word, as we are *washed by the water of the word* ([Ephesians 5:26](#)).

iv. Some have thought that **born of water** means to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the *living water* of [John 7:38-39](#).

v. Some have thought that **born of water** means to receive the water of cleansing prophesied in [Ezekiel 36:25-28](#) as part of the New Covenant. This is the approach has the most weight (though it is a tough call), because of its firm connections to Old Testament prophecy — which Jesus says Nicodemus should have know to understand these things.

c. **That which is born of the flesh is flesh**: Without the new birth of the Spirit, the flesh taints all works of righteousness. Yet, everything that a Spirit-led man does can be pleasing to God.

i. “In this **flesh** is included *every part* of that which is born after the ordinary method of generation: even the spirit of man, which, receptive as it is of the Spirit of God, is yet in the natural birth *dead*, sunk in trespasses and sins.” (Alford)

d. **Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again”**: Again, Nicodemus *did* marvel at this statement, because he — like most all Jews of his time — believed they *already had* the inner transformation promised in the New Covenant. Jesus wants him to take hold of the fact that *he does not have it*, and **must be born again**.

i. We should not forget *whom* Jesus said this to. Nicodemus was a religious leader, a Pharisee, an educated man, and an earnest man. By all outward appearance, he was *already* transformed unto God — yet he was not.

ii. “These solemn words for ever exclude the possibility of salvation by human merit. Man’s nature is so gripped by sin that an activity of the very Spirit of God is a necessity if he is to be associated with God’s kingdom.” (Morris)

e. **The wind blows where it wishes**: Jesus’ idea to Nicodemus was “You don’t understand everything about the wind, but you see its effects. That is just how it is with the birth of the Spirit.” Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that he didn’t have to understand everything about the new birth before he experienced it.

i. Since we can’t control the Spirit, “It should lead us to be very tender and jealous in our conduct towards the Holy Ghost, so that we do not grieve him and cause him to depart from us.” (Spurgeon)

4. (**John 3:9-13**) Jesus responds to the question “how can these things be?”

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”

a. **How can these things be?** Nicodemus was confused. He was so set in his thinking that the new birth has already happened to him and all of faithful Israel, that he had a hard time thinking differently. Jesus had to keep explaining.

b. **Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?** Jesus chided Nicodemus for not being aware of the need and the promise of the new birth, because these were plainly laid out in the Old Testament. Nicodemus knew these passages well, but believed that they had been fulfilled in regard to the new birth. He should have known better.

i. **Are you the teacher of Israel**: “Nicodemus’s exact position in the theological circles of Israel is not defined, but the language suggests that he was a very important person. Jesus implies that as the outstanding teacher of the nation, Nicodemus should have been familiar with the teaching of the new birth.” (Tenney)

c. **If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?** A simple look at **earthly things** — like the illustrations Jesus used, and even a look at his own life — should have made the point plain to Nicodemus. If he could not see that he needed this spiritual transformation, what more could Jesus tell him?

d. **No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven**: Jesus “makes it clear that He can speak authoritatively about things in heaven, though no one else can.” (Morris)

- i. "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)
- ii. **No one has ascended to heaven**: "This seems a figurative expression for, *No man hath known the mysteries of the kingdom of God*; as in [Deuteronomy 30:12](#); [Psalm 73:17](#); [Proverbs 30:4](#); [Romans 11:34](#). And the expression is founded upon this generally received maxim: That to be perfectly acquainted with the concerns of a place, it is necessary for a person to be on the spot." (Clarke)

5. ([John 3:14-15](#)) Jesus and the brazen serpent.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

- a. **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness**: Jesus made a remarkable statement, explaining that the serpent of [Numbers 21:4-9](#) was a picture of the Messiah and His work.

- i. Serpents are often used as pictures of evil in the Bible ([Genesis 3:1-5](#) and [Revelation 12:9](#)). However, Moses' serpent in [Numbers 21](#) was made of bronze, and bronze is a metal associated with judgment in the Bible, because bronze is with fire, a picture of judgment.
- ii. So, a **bronze** serpent does speak of sin, but of sin judged. In the same way Jesus, who knew no sin became sin for us on the cross, and our sin was judged in Him. A bronze serpent is a picture of sin judged and dealt with.
- iii. We would have wanted to diminish our sense of sin, and put the image of a man up on the pole. Our image of man might represent "both good and bad" in man. But a serpent is more apparently sinful, and shows us our true nature and true need of salvation.
- iv. In addition, if the serpent lay horizontally on the vertical pole, it is easy to see how this also was a **visual** representation of the cross. However, many traditions show the serpent being wrapped around the pole, and this is the source for the ancient figure of healing and medicine — a serpent, wrapped around a pole.
- v. In the [Numbers 21:4-9](#) account, the people were saved not by **doing** anything, but by simply **looking** to the bronze serpent. They had to trust that something as seemingly foolish as looking at such a thing would be sufficient to save them, and surely, some perished because they thought it too foolish to do such a thing.
- vi. As it says in [Isaiah 45:22](#): *Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.* We might be willing to do a hundred things to earn our salvation, but God commands us to only trust in Him — to **look to** Him.

b. **Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up**: Even though Jesus bore our sins, He never became a sinner. Even His becoming sin for us was a holy, righteous, act of love. Jesus remained the Holy One throughout the entire ordeal of the cross.

i. "Nicodemus had failed to grasp the teaching about the new birth when it was presented to him in terms drawn from Ezekiel's prophecy; now it is presented to him by means of an object-lesson, from a story with which he had been familiar since childhood." (Bruce)

ii. **Must be lifted up**: "He must die because He would save, and He would save because He did love." (Maclaren)

c. **Lifted up**: This is a term later used to describe both Jesus' crucifixion ([John 12:32](#)) and His ascension ([Acts 2:33](#)). Both meanings are in view, His suffering and exaltation. Jesus was **lifted up** in both ways.

i. The Son of Man is to be lifted up. Yes, but not on a throne in Herod's palace. He was to be conspicuous, but as the brazen serpent had been conspicuous, hanging on a pole for the healing of the people." (Dods)

d. **Should not perish but have eternal life**: The idea behind **eternal life** means much more than a long or never ending life. **Eternal life** does not mean that this life goes on forever. Instead, **eternal life** also has the idea of a certain quality of life, of God's kind of life. It is the kind of life enjoyed in eternity.

i. "The nature of the belief is implied in the illustration of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. Belief consists of accepting something, not doing something." (Tenney)

6. ([John 3:16](#)) God's gift of salvation.

"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."

a. **For God so loved the world**: [John 3:16](#) has long been celebrated as a powerful, succinct, declaration of the gospel. Of the 31,102 verses in the Bible, it may be the most popular single verse used in evangelism.

i. We learn the object of God's love: **For God so loved the world**. God did not wait for the world to turn to Him before He loved the world. He loved and gave His only begotten Son to the world when it was still the **world**!

ii. What Jesus told Nicodemus in [John 3:7](#) (*You must be born again*) refuted the popular Jewish idea regarding the way to salvation. Now Jesus refuted the popular Jewish idea regarding the scope of salvation: **for God so loved the world**.

- iii. The Jews of that day rarely thought that God **loved the world**. Many of them thought that God only loved *Israel*. The universal offer of salvation and life in Jesus was revolutionary.
- iv. “The Jew was ready enough to think of God as loving Israel, but no passage appears to be cited in which any Jewish writer maintains that God loved the world. It is a distinctively Christian idea that God’s love is wide enough to embrace all mankind.” (Morris)
- v. Morrison suggested that there are three centers of love:

- *God so loved the world* ([John 3:16](#)).
- *Christ also loved the church* ([Ephesians 5:25](#)).
- *The Son of God, who loved me* ([Galatians 2:20](#)).

b. **He gave His only begotten Son**: This describes both the *expression* and the *gift* of God’s love. God’s love didn’t just *feel* for the plight of a fallen world. God *did* something about it, and He **gave** the most precious thing to give: **His only begotten Son**.

i. **He gave his only begotten Son**: “These words seem to carry a reference to the offering of Isaac; and Nicodemus in that case would at once be reminded by them of the love *there required*, the *substitution there made*, and the *prophecy there uttered to Abraham*.” (Alford)

c. **Whoever believes in Him**: This describes the *recipient* of God’s love. God loves the world, but the world does not receive or benefit from that love until it **believes in** Jesus, the gift that the Father gave. **Believes in** means much more than intellectual awareness or agreement. It means to *trust in*, to *rely on*, and to *cling to*.

d. **Should not perish**: This describes the *intention* of God’s love. God’s love *actually saves* man from eternal destruction. God looks at fallen humanity, does not want it to **perish**, and so in His love He extends the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

e. **Everlasting life**: This describes the *duration* of God’s love. The love we receive among people may fade or turn, but God’s love will never change. He will never stop loving His people, even unto the furthest distance of eternity.

i. We may say there are Seven Wonders in [John 3:16](#).

<i>God</i>	The Almighty Authority
<i>So loved the world</i>	The Mightiest Motive
<i>That He gave His only begotten Son</i>	The Greatest Gift
<i>That whoever</i>	The Widest Welcome
<i>Believes in Him</i>	The Easiest Escape
<i>Should not perish</i>	The Divine Deliverance
<i>But have everlasting life</i>	The Priceless Possession

ii. “If there is one sentence more than another which sums up the message of the Fourth Gospel, it is this. The love of God is limitless; it embraces all mankind. No sacrifice was too

great to bring its unmeasured intensity home to men and women: the best that God had to give, he gave — his only Son, his well-beloved.” (Bruce)

7. ([John 3:17-21](#)) Sin’s condemnation.

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 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. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

a. **God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world**: Jesus revealed the heart of God the Father in sending God the Son; to bring [salvation](#) — rescue, hope, healing — to the world **through Him**.

i. “Some men will, in fact, be condemned, and that as the result of Christ’s coming into the world ([John 3:19](#)). But the purpose of His coming was not this.” (Morris)

b. **He who does not believe is condemned already**: [John 3:16](#) is the most gracious, wonderful offer conceivable — eternal life for all who believe. Yet the offer has inherent consequences, for any who reject, who refuse to **believe**. Their refusal makes their condemnation certain.

i. A significant issue regarding those who do **not believe** is, “What about those who never had the opportunity to believe because they never heard the good news of Jesus Christ?” This is an important but separate question, addressed best by the Apostle Paul in [Romans 1](#) and [2](#). Here, the focus seems to be on those who *[deliberately reject the message](#)*, as those who heard and encountered Jesus in the first century had opportunity to do.

ii. “No explicit mention is made here of those who have never had the opportunity of believing in Christ, those on whom the light in its fullness has never shone. But John’s words probably unfold the principle of their judgment too. As the eternal Word came to men and women before becoming incarnate in Christ, so it is with the light of God. If men and women are judged by their response to the light, they are judged by their response to such light as is available to them.” (Bruce)

c. **This is the condemnation**: Jesus came to bring salvation, but those who reject that salvation condemn themselves. We never need to leave the [reason](#) for anyone’s **condemnation** at God’s door. The responsibility is theirs alone.

i. "Heaven is too hot to hold unregenerate persons; no such dirty dog ever trampled on that golden pavement, it is an undefiled inheritance." (Trapp)

d. **Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil**: Jesus explained what keeps people from faith and rescue in Him. It is because they are drawn to darkness, and love it more than the light. There is a critical moral dimension to unbelief that is often denied or ignored.

- i. Those who consciously reject Jesus often present themselves as heroic characters who bravely put away superstition and deal honestly with deep philosophical problems. It is far more often true that there is a moral compromise at the root of their rejection.
- ii. Many opponents of Christianity have a vested interest in fighting against the truth of Jesus, because they love their sin and don't want to face it, or face a God who will judge their sin.
- iii. When we think of the love of sin that sends people to hell, we often think of notorious sin. But the simple demand to be lord of my own life is enough of a sin to deserve condemnation before God.

e. **Everyone practicing evil hates the light**: Some express their hatred of the truth by actively fighting against it, and others express their hatred by ignoring God's truth — by saying to Jesus "You are not worth my time." In contrast, **he who does the truth comes to the light**.

- i. **He who does the truth**: "To do the truth' is at any rate to live up to what one knows; to live an honest, conscientious life." (Dods)
- ii. "They chose to walk in the darkness, that they might do the works of darkness-they broke the Divine law, refused the mercy offered to them, are arrested by Divine justice, convicted, condemned, and punished. Whence, then, does their damnation proceed? From THEMSELVES." (Clarke)