

John, Part 10 — The Revelation of Jesus Christ — Born Again

John began by revealing Jesus Christ in His glory.

John 1:14 NKJV And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

After His first miracle, John spoke again about His glory.

John 2:11 NKJV This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

In the past the glory of God had been intolerable, but now in Christ Jesus the glory of God leads to salvation. The signs that Jesus did were not only filled with glory, they were full of grace and truth. His signs and miracles drew people to Jesus and to the gospel of grace and truth.

In our text, a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus as a result of the signs that were done.

John 3:1–2 NKJV 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.

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. He was a senator or a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews. Nicodemus was also a Pharisee, which is a sect of the Jews that strictly obeyed the traditions. **Jesus asked:** “Are you a master in Israel...” (John 3:10). The word “master” indicates a leading official or teacher. As such, he would have been an expert in the Law of God. He held some official position of the highest rank and was authorized or accepted by the public.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. This was a clandestine or private meeting. He apparently feared what other leaders or the public would say or do.

Take a look at Nicodemus’ journey and listen to his words. **In John 3:2 He said,** “Rabbi, we know that 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.”

Jesus had been the point of discussion and His signs caused Nicodemus to find out if Jesus was the true Messiah. Some were sure that perhaps He was because “no one can do these signs... unless God is with him.” “We know” is a clear indication that they were closely examining Jesus’ words and miracles.

As a result of these signs, everyone in Israel was talking about Him and believed, “God was with Him.”

Is Jesus really the Messiah?

After Jesus cleansed the Temple in Jerusalem, “Many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did,” (John 2:23). Everyone knew that when the Messiah was to come, He would do spectacular signs and miracles.

Nicodemus was compelled to find out this one thing. We know you are a teacher sent from God. We have noticed Your signs and miracles. We know that only a man sent from God could do these signs.

Jesus, are You the Messiah of God?

Jesus recognized Nicodemus’ empty, searching heart. He saw through the things that he was asking and went right to the heart of the matter. Nicodemus needed more than he was willing to talk about. It was easier to ask about the signs and miracles. According to Jesus, the signs and miracles were not the important thing... Nicodemus needed to be changed.

Jesus did not answer Nicodemus' question directly but began talking about being born again.

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

This is radically new language.

John 3:7 NKJV Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Jesus was introducing a new concept to Nicodemus. "Nicodemus, you must be born again." This is the first time we hear the words, "You must be born again."

The general idea was introduced by Old Testament prophets. Each time God spoke about this, He revealed more of what would happen.

Jeremiah 24:7 NKJV Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

Ezekiel 11:19–20 NKJV Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 36:26–27 NKJV I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

When God puts this new spirit within them, He takes the old stony heart out of their flesh. He causes them to walk right and keep His judgments, and puts His Spirit within them.

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

Born again can have three different meanings.

- First, it can mean from the beginning or completely and fully, a new start.
- Second, it can mean to do a thing a second time, a repeated act, to start all over again.
- Third, it can mean to be born from above, from heaven, or from God.

The point is this.

- We must be "born again."
- We must be born completely and fully, with a complete and full change.
- We must be born all over again, in the sense of a second time.
- We must be born from above, from God.

Look at the importance of the words, "Cannot see the kingdom of God." One must be "born again" or else he will never "see" (John 3:3) nor "enter" (John 3:5) the Kingdom of God. If anyone wants to enter into the joys that God has prepared in heaven, they must be born again.

John 3:7 NKJV Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Jesus is not proposing an impossibility, but is revealing God's plan for salvation and entrance into His kingdom and everlasting life.

This "new birth" is a spiritual birth.

John 3:4-8 NKJV 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?" 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."

Nicodemus was puzzled and did not understand the words "born again." He understood Jesus to be saying that a man must enter again into his mother's womb and be born a "second time."

Jesus gave him a five-fold answer.

1. Jesus gave the SOURCE of the new birth. "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God," (John 3:5)

The term "born of water" suggests varied ideas.

- The Hebrews considered natural birth as "born of water." When the woman's water broke, the baby would be born.
- Some think this is referring to the "water of the Word of God," (Ephesians 5:26; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18).
- Other's suggest that this refers to water baptism as a requirement for salvation. The Bible does not support this because we are "saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone."
- Water may also refer to the Holy Spirit, (John 7:38-39). Jesus' words "born of water and the Spirit" are a clear expression of spiritual purification by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah and Ezekiel referred to water, wind, and spirit as the Holy Spirit, (Isaiah 44:3-5; Ezekiel 37:9-10).

2. Rebirth is a PREREQUISITE for seeing the kingdom of God.

John 3:3 says without being born again a man "cannot see" the Kingdom of God. **John 3:5** says a man "cannot enter" the Kingdom of God.

3. New birth is spiritual in nature, (John 3:6).

It is a spiritual birth, not a physical or material birth. The flesh cannot bridge the gap between flesh and spirit. Flesh is only flesh and spirit is spirit. Flesh has no power to be born again, to become spirit.

4. Jesus emphasized the necessity of the new birth. Jesus said, "Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again," John 3:7. To enter into heaven and the eternal kingdom of God you must be born again. Being a ruler of the Jews did not exempt Nicodemus from this. There is no way around this, everyone must be born again.

5. The Spirit of God works just like the wind, (John 3:8). We may not know how the wind works, but we can see the effects. The Spirit of God works in a sovereign manner. We may not know how the Holy Spirit works, but we can see, recognize, and know the effects of His working.

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

John 3:9 NKJV Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

Nicodemus' heart was touched by what Jesus was saying. He wanted to know how this could be. Nicodemus was a master in Israel, yet he did not know about these spiritual things.

Titus 3:5 NKJV Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to

His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

At this point Jesus started talking about things that only God knows.

John 3:10-11 NKJV 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.”

Jesus said: “WE speak what WE know and testify what WE have seen,” John 3:11. Jesus is speaking for Himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus knows things Nicodemus does not know. Nicodemus was a scholar and master in Israel, but did not know how to be saved.

John 3:12–13 NKJV 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.

“Earthly things” refers to things that happen on earth. “Heavenly things” refers to the things that Jesus explains in the next verses.

Jesus sees and knows things that Nicodemus does not see or know. **1 Corinthians 2:14** tells us, “The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God.”

How can we know the things of God?

Romans 8:16 NKJV The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

1 John 4:13 NKJV By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

Jesus was revealing wonderful mysteries of the Kingdom of God and Nicodemus was struggling to believe. Jesus said you did not receive “*Our witness*” and “*you do not believe.*” Nicodemus found Jesus’ comments unbelievable. Human nature cannot receive the things of God. It is man’s nature not to believe.

Jesus began talking about heavenly things.

John 3:13 NKJV No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

1. Jesus said, “He came down from heaven.” Jesus was saying no man is able to ascend up into heaven. No man can penetrate the spiritual world from the fleshly world. What is born of the earth is earthly. *Jesus Christ was different from all other men.* His origin was out of heaven from the spiritual world.

2. Jesus was saying He is timeless. “The Son of Man which is in heaven” means His existence and experience are timeless. Although He was born of a virgin, Jesus never lost His true identity. He is the eternal Son of God.

Then Jesus taught how the New Birth is secured.

First, the Son of Man must be lifted up.

John 3:14–15 NKJV 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.

In Numbers 21:4-9, Moses lifted up a bronze serpent in the wilderness. God had given them water and manna, but they said, “There is no food or water, and we loathe this worthless food.” He had been their shield and protection, but Israel murmured and grumbled about their trials in the wilderness. God disciplined them by sending a plague of

fiery serpents. As a result, the people repented and begged for mercy. God met their need by telling Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole for the people to see. Everyone who looked on the bronze serpent was healed.

Jesus said He must be lifted up just as the serpent was lifted up. *What did He mean?* Just as the people of Israel were dying from the poison of the fiery serpents, people are dying from the poison of sin. The serpent hanging on the pole symbolized Satan's defeat.

Jesus Christ destroyed the works of the devil by being lifted up on the cross.

The lifting up of Christ is possibly four fold:

- First, it represents the cross on which Christ was lifted up.
- Second, it shows the resurrection, where Christ conquered the grave and death.
- Third, He was lifted up by the ascension and exaltation to the right hand of the Father.
- Fourth, it may loosely refer to the exaltation and worship of believers.

Salvation only comes by looking upon the Son of Man who has been lifted up upon the cross.

John 12:31–32 KJV Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

1 Peter 2:24 NKJV Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed.

The second act is man's belief in Jesus.

John 3:15-16 NKJV that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 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.

Isaiah 53:5 NKJV But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

If we want eternal life, we must believe that Jesus Christ died on a cross for our sins.