

John 3:1-15

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." (ESV)

1,2 Nicodemus was a member of the ruling body called the Sanhedrin. He may have come at night so others would not see him meeting with and thereby giving credit to Jesus. Who is the "we" who know Jesus if from God? If Nicodemus is speaking of other members of the Sanhedrin, it makes the execution of Jesus a battle against God.

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

3 The word "again" can also mean "from above". The double meaning is intentional. Notice that Jesus cut right to the point. He could see Nicodemus' heart.

⁴ 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?"

4 Did he completely miss the point or is he just asking for clarification?

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

5 Water and Spirit parallelism is in the next verse, flesh and Spirit and goes with "again." It is a repetition in different terminology of verse 3. In other words, physically born and then spiritually born. The major change is from "see" to "enter."

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

6 Physical birth does not produce a spiritual being. Our natural birth is a product of biology. We are born spiritually dead. Our spirit must be born by the Spirit, a product of the Spirit. We can't expect carnal beings to act in a spiritual way. They cannot see and have not entered the kingdom of God (John 6:63). Wind and spirit are the same Greek word.

⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

7,8 Jesus uses the play on the double meaning of *pneuma* (wind or spirit). Nic shouldn't be surprised because it is the same with the wind. Forecasters with all their computer modelling still can't tell exactly where the wind will go. The person led by the Spirit doesn't know what will happen next. I was going to work on these notes and ended up sharing Scripture with a hungry soul.

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?"

9,10 Nic has never heard teaching like this and doesn't understand how it is possible. The teacher of teachers doesn't know the beginning of a life of faith.

11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

11,12 “We” – the three in one, Trinity, is revealing truth to Nic, but the Sanhedrin isn’t willing to listen even though they see the signs that prove He is from God.

13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

13 Jesus came from heaven. Who ascended from Mount Sinai? The same One who came down on Sinai (Exodus 19:18-20). The one the elders saw, Jesus in His glory (Exodus 24:9,10)!

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

14,15 Jesus referred to Numbers 21:9. The Jews of old murmured against God, so God sent venomous snakes into the camp. The bronze pole represented judgment. The snake is the source of the evil in the world. We are all infected with his poison - sin (rebellion toward God). To look in faith to the judgment upon sin, the cross, the venom in us is removed supernaturally, and we live! Jesus, with the sins of the world upon Him, would be judged for the sins of the world. Jesus orchestrated that event in history to illustrate what He would do for us. This is the answer to what Nic was asking, “How can this be? How can a man be born-again/from above, have eternal life, enter God’s kingdom? The answer is what Jesus would do for us.

Questions:

Nic was afraid to be identified with Jesus? Do we ever feel that pressure?

What did Jesus say Nic needed?

How is it made possible?

What is the illustration Jesus gave?