



# Chapter 3 – Part 1

Nicodemus  
& the  
New Birth

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# John 3:1-13

## The New Birth

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- **John 3:1-13** There was a man of the Pharisees named **Nicodemus**, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> 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.”
- <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”
- <sup>4</sup> 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?”
- <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘**You must be born again.**’ <sup>8</sup> 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.**”
- <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”
- <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? <sup>11</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

# John 3:1-13

## The New Birth

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### John 1:12-13

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

- **A Child must be Born**
- **A Child has a Father**
- **“Our Father who art in Heaven”** – The practice of individuals calling God **“Father”** was unknown to the Old Testament prophets. **Jesus Christ was the first to bring this teaching that the New Birth creates a Father-Child relationship under the New Covenant.**

## John 3:1-10

# Nicodemus & The New Birth

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- Deals with the most important question of humanity: **How is man right with God? (Job 25:4)**. If anyone should have know the answer to this it was Nicodemus.
- **Being born** again mentioned **5X** , **belief** mentioned **7X**
- **Doctrine of Regeneration** – for anyone to receive **eternal life**, salvation, heaven...**they must be born again** through putting their faith in Jesus in order to have their sins forgiven and have a relationship with God.
- Birth is an analogy illustrating that the miracle of child birth, like salvation, can only be accomplished by God’s sovereign power. You did not participate in your own physical birth. You play no role in spiritual birth either.
- Salvation is a 100% divine miracle from God (no “how to” steps given). No self effort required (Faith & Repentance).
- This carries over the theme from 2:23-25 and Jesus’ refusal to accept shallow faith, based on His miracles.

## John 3:1-10

# Nicodemus

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- **Nicodemus was one of the most elite teachers & religious leaders in Jerusalem** (a Pharisee & member of the Sanhedrin council).
- Pharisee (means separated ones in terms of being zealous of the Mosaic law) & he was a “**ruler of the Jews**”. Pharisees believed in Messiah & Resurrection.
- Pharisees were ironically so zealous for the law that (external behaviour modification) that they “neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness...” Matt 23:23. Also they were hypocrites and didn't practice what they taught.

## John 3:1-10

# Nicodemus

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- Nicodemus goes to Jesus for advice because he's never seen anyone do miracles like this, and he knew Jesus was from God and was a teacher above himself (John 10:38). **At least he was a Pharisee that didn't attribute His miracles to Satan.**
- He goes at night (to avoid detection from his peers) & addresses Jesus as "Rabbi...we know...you came from God", showing great respect for Him.
- Jesus doesn't respond to Nicodemus' opening statement about His signs, but launches right into being Born Again, because Jesus knew his heart and his desire for salvation. **Jesus knew what he really wanted – Salvation.**
- **Q. What did the Pharisees believe? Are there Pharisees today? (you and I?)**

## John 3:1-10

# Nicodemus

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- **Q1. What did the Pharisees believe?**
  - They believed in the one true God
  - They had a great respect for the Law
  - They believed in & studied the Bible diligently
  - They had a concern for holy living
  - They believed in the resurrection of the dead
  - They were disciplined in their lifestyle and worship
- **Q2. Are there Pharisees today (legalists)?**
  - You and I? ...**Look in the mirror!** Most Christians are.
  - This is a matter of the heart. Do you Love Jesus with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? **Prove it!**

John 3:4

# Nicodemus' Misunderstanding

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- Nicodemus asks how a man can be **born again** from his mother's womb. (He had no assurance of his salvation.)
- Nicodemus was a brilliant theologian used to analogies, which basically means "this is humanly impossible".
- Therefore the **key point** is that being **born again is something that you have nothing to do with, like the wind blowing. You cannot earn salvation.**
- **Jesus was telling Nicodemus that he cannot be right with God by his own goodness (works).**



## John 3:4

# Born Again

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- **“Born”** translated from Greek means to **“from Above”** and it also means literally **“born again”** (from an outside agent).
- Therefore, this really means that we must be **“born again from above”**, by the work of the Holy Spirit.
- This refers to **spiritual regeneration** on the moment you repent and put your faith in Jesus Christ (**Salvation**).
- Same Greek word for **“Born”** is used in the following:
  - **John 3:31** <sup>31</sup> He who comes from **above is above** all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.
  - **John 19:11** <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from **above**.”

John 3:8

# Don't Try to Understand... Just Believe!

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- Jesus responds in v.8 (like the wind blowing) that **you don't have to understand** everything to accept what He is saying, **you only need to believe**.
- This is the heart of the Gospel of Grace.
- **Do you see this problem with unbelievers and some Christian teachers today - always needing to rationalize/understand/prove Jesus?**

John 3:3

“**unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”**

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## Kingdom of God – 2 Aspects

There was 2 comings of Christ prophesied:

1. In the **First Coming**, Jesus is establishing a **Spiritual Kingdom** of the heart, revealed by revelation and indwelling of the Holy Spirit of those who believe (Luke 17:20-21). (**Gospel of Grace/Salvation**)
2. In the **Second Coming**, there will be a **Physical Earthly Kingdom** (Rev. 20:1-6) where Jesus will reign as King in Jerusalem, and after 1,000 years God will create a new heaven and a new earth that will last forever (Rev. 22-1-5). (**Gospel of the Kingdom**)

**Kingdom of God** – subject of Jesus’ 1<sup>st</sup> and last sermon and of most of the parables. The Lord’s Prayer tells us the complete reign of God that is now in heaven will one day be on earth. It’s here and now (salvation) but not yet consummated.

John 3:3; 5

# BORN AGAIN = REGENERATION

(the deepest doctrine of the Bible)

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1. A new birth is necessary because the “natural man” is blind to spiritual truth and incapable to see or enter the kingdom of God. (“**Born**” in Greek means a completed action from an outside agent (**from above**), man is incapable of it).
2. The new birth is not a reformation of the old nature, but a creative act of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Condition of the new birth is FAITH in Christ crucified.**
4. Through the new birth the believer becomes a member of the family of God, receives a divine nature and the life of Christ Himself.

# D.L. Moody Quote

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- “I hold to the doctrine of sudden conversion as I do to my life, and I would as quickly give up my life as give up this doctrine, unless it can be proved that it is not according to the Word of God.
- Now, I will admit that light is one thing and birth is another.
- **A soul must be born before it can see light.** A child must be born before it can be taught; it must be born before it can walk; it must be born before it can be educated.”

## John 3:5

**“...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”**

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- Due to Nicodemus’ misunderstanding of “born again” in v.4, Jesus restates it with more detail.
- The major difference is the change from “**born again**” (meaning born from above) to “**born of water and Spirit**”.
- When water is used figuratively, it refers to renewal or cleansing.
- The message to readers is no matter how good your deeds or credentials are (works), you too must be born again.
- Emphasizes the fulfillment of OT promises anticipating the outpouring of the Spirit. This has nothing to do with water baptism.
- **Amazing** - We move from **Chapter 2** where **water was turned to wine** to **Chapter 3** where **water is symbolized by the atoning blood** of Christ that cleanses us of sin. **Wine at the Last Supper was symbolic of Christ’s blood which ratified the New Covenant!**

# Salvation is a Sovereign Work of God!

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- Jesus uses two Analogies to Demonstrate this:
  - 1) **Born of Spirit**, v.6 & 2) **Like the Wind Blowing**, v.8
- Being Born Again of Water and Spirit can only be done by God.
- God will cleanse us of sin and give us a new heart.
- The whole unbelieving world is like Nicodemus, thinking they can save themselves by works
- **Until you understand you are born in your mother's womb a sinner (Ps. 51:5), completely depraved, you will not understand your need for a new birth.**

This is a  
work of  
God!

## Ezekiel 36:25-27 (**New Covenant**)

# The New Birth

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- “<sup>25</sup>Then **I will** sprinkle clean **water** on you, and you shall be clean; **I will** cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.
- <sup>26</sup> **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.
- <sup>27</sup> **I will** put My **Spirit** within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.



God promises the future salvation of Israel. Also God's plan of Salvation for everyone.

## Ezekiel 37:3-7 (Dry Bones)

# The New Birth

- <sup>3</sup> And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”
- So I answered, “O Lord GOD, You know.”
- <sup>4</sup> Again He said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: “Surely **I will** cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> **I will** put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.”
- <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, O My people, **I will** open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.
- <sup>14</sup> **I will** put My **Spirit** in you, and **you shall live**, and **I will** place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the LORD.’ ”

# New Covenant & New Birth

(Nicodemus should have known this OT teaching on the new birth)

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## Ezekiel 11:19-25

<sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> 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.

## Jeremiah 24:7

<sup>7</sup> 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.

# New Covenant & New Birth

(Nicodemus should have known this OT teaching on the new birth)

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## Jeremiah 31:31-33

<sup>31</sup> “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will **make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— <sup>32</sup> not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup> But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will **put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Joel 2:28/Acts 2:17 “And it shall come to pass afterward That I will **pour out My Spirit on all flesh...**”

## Psalms 51

v.2 “**Wash me** thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.”

v.7 “Purge me (purify me) with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

v.10-11 “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your **Holy Spirit** from me.”

# The New Birth is based on the Doctrine of Human Depravity

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- Nicodemus' lack of understanding is a failure to understand **SIN & HUMAN DEPRAVITY** (not about reformation, but transformation).
  - Romans 5:12-14
    1. Death is universal (v.12, 14 – because all have sinned)
    2. Cause of Death is Sin (v.12b – Spiritual, Physical, Eternal)
    3. Sin Entered the World through Adam (v.12a)
    4. We have a Universal Sin Nature (spiritual depravity/bankruptcy of man)
- If we don't understand that **SIN** is man's problem, we won't appreciate the solution, that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (5:8)
- Repentance upon salvation requires confessing from the heart that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness.

# The New Birth is based on the Doctrine of Human Depravity

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## Jeremiah 17:9

<sup>9</sup> “**The heart is deceitful above all things**, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

## Romans 3

<sup>10</sup> “There is none righteous, no, not one;

<sup>20</sup> Therefore **by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified** in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.<sup>22</sup> ...

**For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**

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- Salvation is a sovereign act of God that He does by grace, without any action by man. Man needs a complete spiritual birth, to be washed and a new heart and the Holy Spirit.

# Flesh Produces Flesh (v.6)

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- An apple tree can only produce apples, it cannot produce oranges – like produces like.
- If you are born human, you remain human, if you are born from God, you remain from God)
- The point is that human birth produces an earthly creation, but the Spirit gives birth to Spiritual creation.
- **For humans born of flesh to experience this new birth, The Word, God Himself became flesh (John 1:14)**

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## Genesis 6:3; 5

<sup>3</sup> And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed **flesh**” (*corrupt, fallen, sinful*)

<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. (*what flesh produces*)

## Job 14:4; 25:4-6

<sup>14:4</sup> Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean? No one! <sup>25:4</sup> **How then can man be righteous before God?** Or how can he be pure *who is* born of a woman? ... <sup>6</sup> How much less man, *who is* a maggot, And a son of man, *who is* a worm?” **Also: Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10**

**Man is spiritually dead without the New Birth, and he needs a new heart**

John 3:8-9

# Salvation is “like the wind blowing”

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- **7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 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.”**
- **Born of the Spirit – v.6 – like the wind blowing (v.8)**
- **Wind is the second analogy. You have no control over the wind (like being born).**
- **The wind is the sovereign work of God.**

## John 3:10

# Are you the teacher of Israel?

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- Jesus berates him in v.10 for not understanding this as the “teacher of Israel”
- Nicodemus should have known about the new birth (in view of his expert Biblical knowledge regarding the New Covenant and the Messiah).
- As the nations leading teacher, he was very familiar with using analogies and metaphors to explain spiritual principles (i.e. the wind blows) and should have been able to understand this in the context.
- Also, as a Pharisee, he may have been too confident of his religious life to think he needed repentance, let alone his whole life cleansed and heart transformed.



## John 3:11

**“Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.”**

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- This means, Jesus is telling us the **TRUTH** about **SALVATION** that He actually **KNOWS** and has experienced first hand.
- **“We & Our”** are plural – and encompass John the Baptist and the disciples who understood the truth.
- Jesus’ came to preach (He was an evangelist – Mark 1:38), and this is what he is doing with Nicodemus.
- **“You”** is plural – therefore Jesus is saying that **not only does Nicodemus not believe, but the world does not believe.**
- **Do you get discouraged when people don’t believe the Gospel when you share it with them?**
  - Don’t be surprised, they didn’t believe Jesus either.
  - Natural instinct believes that salvation is based on “works” (pride-based); people don’t want to believe it can be based on faith only.

## John 3:11

# Unbelief - Man's Biggest Problem

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- Man has solved many problems in life: health/life span; living conditions; diseases; technology; etc.
- The three problems man cannot solve or explain is **EVIL** in the heart of man (sin), **DEATH** (caused by sin) and human **SUFFERING**.
- Satan has always promoted the lie that humans can come to God on their own terms ( “surely you will not die...and you will be like God” Gen. 3:4-5).
- In other words they can “work” their way to heaven by good deeds and self reformation.
- **What does the Bible say about unregenerate people...**
  - **Spiritually Dead** – Eph. 2:1
  - **Spiritually Blind** – can’t understand spiritual truth – 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor 4:4
  - **Enemies of God** – Rom. 5:10; James 4:4
  - **Subject to God’s wrath** – John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6
  - **Children of Satan** – Matt. 13:38; John 8:44; 1 John 3:10; Eph 2:2
  - **Members of Satan’s Kingdom** – Matt. 12:26; Col 1:13
  - **Slaves to Sin** – John 8:34; Rom 6:17; 20

## John 3:12

**“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ”**

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- Since Jesus just stated that Nicodemus doesn't believe Him, He decides that it's not worth telling him anything more.
- **Don't throw your pearls to swine** (Matt 7:7) - **Discuss**
- **Spiritually Blind people cannot understand heavenly things.**
- Jesus gave him a simple earthly analogy (child-birth) and he couldn't believe that, so how can He speak about heavenly things (i.e. Kingdom, Trinity, Atonement, pre-destination, eternal life, etc.)
- **Unbelief produces ignorance** – an unbeliever can never explain the Bible or spiritual things – **1 Cor. 2:14**
- The only thing someone can do to receive eternal life is to **BELIEVE!** That is enough. But it seems to be the hardest thing for people to do.

## John 3:13

**“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ”**

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- Jesus said many times He came from Heaven: **John 6:33, 38; 51; 8:42; 13:3;16:28; 17:5.**
- The only ones mentioned of going to Heaven & coming back are: **Lazarus** (John 11); **Paul** (2 Cor. 12); **Elijah** (exceptions)
- The fact that this is so rare in the Bible testifies that this is true.
- Be very skeptical when people say they went to Heaven and came back. Jesus says here that this is not true.
- That’s why Paul says if anyone brings any other Gospel, let them be accursed. The Gospel came form Heaven.

# Nicodemus Disappears Now

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- **Nicodemus shows up again in:**
  - John 7:50 where he defends Jesus to the Pharisees. This was a bold act by Nicodemus.
  - John 19:39 where he joins Joseph in burying Jesus.
  - Tradition says that he defended Jesus before Pilot, he was baptized by Peter and John, he was deprived of his office and fortune and he was banished from Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin who he served.
- Nicodemus received a new heart and was born again.

# Summary

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- You must be Born Again
- You must recognize your need for a new birth, which can only be accomplished by recognizing your sin.
- You must rely only on God for this new birth, since it is impossible to achieve it by your own works (God's grace).
- You will not fully understand it (like the wind blowing).
- You don't need to understand, you only need to Believe.
- Next week we will learn that the only way to be born again is through Faith in Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross, and whose shed blood paid the ransom price of redemption for the forgiveness of your sins, and who was buried and rose again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day.
- Faith in these facts is the only way to be born again. If you reject this teaching of Jesus, you will die in your sins and never enter the Kingdom of God.