

## John 3:1-15 – Born of the Spirit

The beginning of the third chapter of John is a continuation of the end of chapter 2. There were a number of times when people “believed”, followed or praised Jesus but who quickly began to argue with Jesus and challenge whatever Jesus said to them. Jesus knew what was in man (2:25). Chapter three is a well known chapter. The phrase “born again” comes from this chapter. What was the meaning of Jesus’ statements to Nicodemus (and to us all)? The challenge is to look at the chapter with fresh eyes and a heart and mind seeking God’s truth.

**Read John 3:1-15.**

What do we know about Nicodemus? (3:1-2)

What is the significance of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night? (3:2) See John 19:39 where John again mentioned the fact that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night.

Note Nicodemus’ use of the word “we”. What did Nicodemus claim to know about Jesus? (3:2)

Do you think Nicodemus saw Jesus as an equal, a superior or someone subject to his authority? (3:1-2)

Jesus quickly dispensed with the niceties. What did Jesus say was needed for someone to see the kingdom of God? (3:3)

Most translations have “born again” or “born anew”. Both contain the meaning that a second birth is necessary. A few translations have “born from above”. These are valid translations for the Greek. A third basic meaning for the Greek word, “from the beginning”, doesn’t seem to fit the context. Which translation best fits the context? (3:3)

Notes: John also used this word in 3:31 – “He who comes **from above**” is parallel with “He who comes from heaven” and is in contrast to “he who is of the earth”. The word is also used in 19:11 – Jesus told Pilate that he had no authority except what was given to him “from above”. The last use of the word in John is found in 19:23. It is used of Jesus’ garment being woven “from top” to bottom. It is also important to note that John recorded people’s reactions to what Jesus said. Sometimes they DID understand Jesus. Mostly they didn’t have a clue. Nicodemus understood Jesus’

statement as “born again”. Just because Nicodemus understood it that way doesn’t mean it was the meaning which Jesus intended.

Nicodemus started out saying that Jesus was a teacher sent from God. After one statement from Jesus he basically called him crazy. He didn’t seek to understand what Jesus was saying. He immediately assumed that Jesus was making an idiotic statement. Why did Nicodemus do this? (3:4) Do we sometimes put words in people’s mouths instead of truly listening? Do we put words in God’s mouth without truly listening?

When you speak the truth, you never need to backtrack. Jesus basically repeated his first statement but with some clarifying variations. What did Jesus say was necessary for someone to enter the kingdom of God? (3:5-7) In verses 5-8, how many times did Jesus mention being born of the Spirit?

In verse 5 Jesus used the words “water and Spirit”. What is the meaning of this phrase? Is this referring to two different births or to one birth? See Ezekiel 36:25-27. It is interesting to note Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and fire”. Is this two different baptisms or just two words referring to the same baptism? The parallel passages of Mark and John record John the Baptist saying that Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Spirit”. They did not mention “and with fire”.

How is being born of the Spirit different from physical birth? How is being born of the Spirit like the wind? (3:5-8)

In verse 9, what was Nicodemus’ second reaction to Jesus?

According to Jesus, why should Nicodemus have believed him? (3:10-13)

Jesus talked about his resurrection after he cleansed the temple. In 3:14-15 he talked about his death. What Old Testament passage did Jesus reference? How did that event foreshadow Jesus’ death on the cross?