John 3:1-21: You Must Be Born Again

Tommy Meador / General Adult

John / John 3:1–22

Introduction

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- The woman didn't know that she was the one that needed to be found!
- It could be that you are here this morning, and you don't know that you are the one that needs to be found!
- John 3 is a powerful reminder that you can be involved in the things of God and yet not be saved.
- Maybe you participate in the church because you like the way coming to a worship service makes you feel. Maybe you participate in church because you think by being in church you're impressing God enough by your involvement that He might give you a place in heaven. Maybe you participate because your family makes you participate. Maybe you participate because you think having some religion in your life makes you a better person.
- Jesus didn't come to make you a better person. (e.g., a better parent, spouse, friend, more moral, etc.) Jesus came to make you a new person.
- Do you simply want to be a better person, or will you let Jesus do a work in your life so that you might become a new person?
- You don't need to be a religious person. You don't need to be a better person. You need to be born again. Have you been born again?

- John 3 is one of the most famous stories in the Bible about a religious man who thought he had life figured out until he encountered Jesus. From this story I want to show you three truths about the new life that you must understand.

We all need to be born again.

- John 3-4 - Two conversations with two very different people. The first conversation with a religious insider - a Pharisee who's a member of the Sanhedrin.
- Pharisees = an influential Jewish religious group made up of mostly middle-class businessmen known for their study of Scripture and strict observance of God's law. They also followed detailed religious traditions handed down through generations.
- Sanhedrin = a "supreme court" made up of Sadducees, Pharisees, and priests who tried religious cases.
- Nicodemus was a powerful and learned man who knew there was something unique about Jesus. John 2:23-25 - Nicodemus an example of someone whose belief was incomplete.
- vs. 2 - Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night. Was he afraid of being seen in conversation? Or, wanted a quiet, uninterrupted conversation with Jesus? John's theme of darkness - Nicodemus someone who was in darkness comes to have a conversation with the One who is The Light.
- Nicodemus approaches Jesus with humility, respect, and genuine curiosity: "Rabbi, who are you?" He acknowledges that Jesus could only perform miracles if he was from God. Is Jesus a prophet? The Messiah?
- vs. 3 - Jesus gets right to Nicodemus' spiritual condition. No one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again. Also can be translated "from above." Nicodemus needs a supernatural birth from above to see the Kingdom of God.

- No amount of religious effort will bring us into the Kingdom of God.
- All of Nicodemus knowledge, piety, and religious effort didn't change the reality that he was spiritually blind.
- Jesus' message to the religious insider: religion is not enough. You can be faithful to religion and still blind to the kingdom of God.
- You can be faithful to religion yet still dead in your sin and separated from God. This was Nicodemus!
- **Beware of participation without surrender.** "Im here every Sunday" but dismissive of God's Word and unwilling to repent of sins.
- **Beware of knowledge without personal examination.** Know what the Bible says without letting it penetrate your heart.
- **Beware of a past religious experience with no present trust.** When you were a kid, you prayed a prayer, or maybe even baptize, but your life today shows no active trust of the Lord. You may have had an experience but were you bor**n again?**
- **Beware of Christian surroundings without a Christian life.** Your surrounded by Christian family and friends. It creates a false assurance. "I'm in because of who I'm around."

We can't be born again on our own.

- vs. 4 - Jesus' statement shook Nicodemus. Nicodemus was religious, knew the Torah, was zealous about piety, and now Jesus tells him that he can't see the Kingdom of God unless he's born again. What did Jesus even mean? How can an old man be born again or start over?
- vs. 5 - must be born of water and Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God. Some Bible students thin reference to water is a reference to natural birth or maybe a reference to baptism. It's likely not a reference to either.

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- vs. 6 - Natural people can give birth to more natural people. You can produce a physical family, but you cannot produce a spiritual family. Only God can produce a spiritual family.
- In Christ, by the Spirit, God is pouring out the blessings of the new covenant. In Christ, God gives new birth, our sins are washed away and all is made new. The Old Covenant anticipated this day.
- vs. 8 - It's a work of the Spirit. The Spirit is like the wind. In Greek, same word for *Spirit* used for *wind* (pneuma). The wind isn't under your control. The wind is under God's control. You can't see the wind, but you can see its affects. You can't see the Sprit of God, but you can see the affects of His work.
- If you are a follower of Jesus, your new birth is the result of the Spirit's work, not your work. The new birth is a gracious work of the sovereign God of all creation. You didn't earn new life, and you don't deserve new life.
- You are saved because according to God's plan, He determined to bring you into His family. Someone shared the Gospel with you, and the Spirit opened your eyes to your need for a Savior, the Spirit showed you your sin, and you responded in faith to the work of the Spirit.
- **What does it mean to be born again?**
- A new heart - a heart that is softened to the things of God, a change in disposition towards Him - not resistant to God, but desiring to be molded by God.
- A new relationship - instead of an enemy of God, a child of God and belonging in the family of God. You want to know God.

- A new direction - a life that wants to be led by God's Spirit, love what God loves, hate what God's hate, longing to live for His will.
- **What's the difference between being a good, religious person and being born again?**
- Try harder vs. complete dependency
- I'm going to try harder to not argue with my spouse and children because I don't like conflict in my home vs. God, help me see my pride that leads me to demand my way. Help me to love my family sacrificially.
- I'm going to try to avoid sexual sin because I don't want to get found out vs. God, teach me to have a heart of purity that leads me to honor people instead of use them for my own needs.
- I'm going to give money to the church because it makes me feel good about myself vs. God, please loosen the grip that money and materialism have on my soul.
- People who are born again want more than personal good habits and a moral life. People who are born again live transformed lives. God has changed and is changing their hearts to desire what He wants.
- Have you been born again? Is there evidence that the Spirit has saved you?
- Can you explain to someone else what it means to be born again?

We can only be born again by believing in Jesus.

- The Spirit does the work, and we respond to His work by believing in what Jesus has done.
- vs. 9 -10 - "How can these things be?" For years, Nicodemus had taught people that the way to enter the Kingdom of God was by keeping the Law and traditions of Judaism. Jesus' words shake Nicodemus to the core. Jesus gives Nicodemus a gentle rebuke. A s a teacher of the

Law, Nicodemus should have known these things. He should have known that the new birth was built on Old Testament teaching.

- vs. 11-12 - Jesus confronts Nicodemus's unbelief. Jesus described the new birth —the Spirit's work in people here on earth. But, Nicodemus and those he represents have not received Jesus' testimony. If they won't believe Jesus about the new birth, how will they believe him when he explains God's heavenly plan to give eternal life through the Son?
- vs. 14-15 - a reference to Numbers 21:4-9. When Israel sinned against God by grumbling and complaining, God sent poisonous snakes to strike them as judgment for their sins. But, God provided a way of healing - Moses lifted up a bronze serpent on a pole. All who looked to the snake lived.
- At the cross, Jesus Christ lifted up not on a pole but a cross. In the days of Moses, when judgment came on the people of God, the only way to escape judgement was to look up. The only way for us to escape judgment is to look up and see the Son of Man on the cross, taking the punishment for our sins in our place, dying the death that we deserve. Look up and see Him carrying the burden of your sin. Look up and believe that Jesus is the Savior who has come to rescue you from the judgment of God. Look up and see the One who not only died but rose again three days later for your salvation. Look up and place your faith in the only One who can save you.
- vs. 16 - Why would the God of all creation give His only begotten Son to be lifted up on a cross to take the punishment for our sins? Because He loves the very world that rebelled against Him. The cross shows us that the God of all creation, who had every right to punish us for our rebellion, was willing to sacrifice His own Son His demand for justice could be satisfied, we could escape His wrath, and be brought into His family.

- vs. 17-18 - When Jesus came 2,000 years ago, He did not come to condemn us but save us. But, judgment will come for all who reject Him. Those who reject Jesus are already condemned - that's your standing before God right now if you are choosing to reject Him. On the Last Day - you will get what you deserve, but your standing can changed from condemned to redeemed if you will trust Jesus today.
- vs. 19-21 - Why do so many people reject what Jesus offers? They love the darkness because they love their evil deeds. The light exposes their sin, so they avoid the light to keep it hidden. Those who live by the truth come into the light, and they reveal that God is at work in their lives.
- John showing us that being born again is completely a work of the Spirit, and you respond to the Spirit's work by trusting in Jesus alone for salvation.
- **You need regular cross training.**
- Exercise the Gospel muscles. The cross that saved you sustains you. The cross not just how you come to faith, but how you stay grounded in the faith.
- Daily look back. How can you daily remind yourself of how God demonstrated His love for you at the cross? Memorize Romans 8:31-39.
- Daily look ahead. How often do you remind yourself that God preparing you for eternity? 1 Peter 1.
- If you don't constantly think about the Good News you'll struggle applying the Good News to your present struggles.
- Daily looking back and daily looking ahead keeps you from despair in the present.
- This morning, if you are not a follower of Jesus, look to Him for salvation. Maybe you relate to Nicodemus. You're religious, but not born

again. Today, maybe the Spirit is at work in your heart. Respond to Him by believing Jesus died to pay the penalty of your sin and rose again to give you new life. Repent and believe.

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