

## Jesus' Nighttime Interview

---

John 3:1-21

John 3 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. It contains one of the most loved verses (3:16). [It is a personal favorite of mine since God used the verses of our text to change my life in December, 1967.] It deals with man's greatest spiritual need—The need to be "*born again*." Without being "*born again*" no one can enter the Kingdom of God.

Our text is the account of an interview between Jesus and a high ranking Pharisee named Nicodemus. What do you think it would like if Diane Sawyer or Barbara Walters interviewed Jesus? I think our text gives us a good idea how it would have gone—Jesus took control of the interview.

CONTEXT: Jesus recently cleansed the Temple. It must have been the "talk of the town." Perhaps Nicodemus was there when it happened. He witnessed some of the miracles Christ did (2:23). He saw something in Jesus he had never seen before. He wanted to know more, and came to Jesus at night seeking a private interview.

Why did he came at night? Was he afraid of what other Pharisees might think? Was he embarrassed? Or, was it because it was the only time he could fit the meeting into his busy schedule? Whatever the reason, the most important thing is He came to the right person and that HE CAME AT ALL! Some will not come to Jesus no matter what time it is!

The interview can be **divided into three parts as it develops:**

### **I. Jesus and Nicodemus—FACE to FACE** (vs 1-3).

#### A. The CHARACTER of Nicodemus.

1. His **position**—A Pharisee. The religious elite.
  - "Pharisee" = "separated." Ultra-separatist.
  - Strict observance of the Law
  - Prayed, fasted twice a week, and tithed (Luke 18:10-12)
  - Outwardly righteous (Mt. 5:20).
2. His **power**—"a ruler of the Jews." Religious leader in the Sanhedrin (like Supreme Court). He was one in authority. He had a lot of clout.

3. His **profession**— “*a master of Israel*” (v. 10). He was not only religious, but a teacher of religion in the synagogue.
4. His **perception** (v. 2). He knew something ABOUT Jesus.
  - Called Jesus, “Rabbi” (teacher). The world acknowledges Jesus as a Teacher.
  - Recognized Jesus came from God. Many believe this.
  - Recognized God’s presence with Jesus. The devil knows this (James 2:17).
  - With all these things, he still needed to be “*born again.*”

#### B. The COMMAND of Christ.

➡ Jesus pulls no punches—He gets right to the point (vs. 3, 7).

- Your religion is not enough.
- Your good works is not enough.
- Your knowledge of who I am is not enough.
- You gotta be born again!”

#### 1. **Universal** command. No exceptions.

a) How many of you here have ever been born? All of us!

b) But that isn’t good enough for heaven. You must be “*born again*” because you were born wrong the first time (Ps. 51:5). UNFIT FOR HEAVEN.

#### 2. **Urgent** command (“*Verily, verily...*” Double “*verily*”—Denotes something vitally important.). Jesus didn’t say, “I have a suggestion for you Nick.”

- Jesus repeats it three times (vs. 3, 5, 7)

## II. **Jesus and Nicodemus—MIND to MIND** (vs. 4-8).

➡ Understanding the meaning of the new birth

#### A. Nicodemus’ CONFUSION (v. 4).

1. Nicodemus is thinking in terms of “*the natural man*” (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14)
2. Thinking only in the physical realm—A physical kingdom and physical birth. Since he was born a Jew, he assumed that would qualify him to be in God’s Kingdom.

3. Some believe since their parents went to church and they were raised in a Christian home that automatically makes them citizens of God's Kingdom. Not true.

B. Jesus' CLARIFICATION (vs. 5-8).

➡ The new birth is NOT church membership... baptism... doing good works.

➡ Since the term "*born again*" originated with Jesus, we need to look into His Word to see what it means.

1. Birth #1 (v. 5)—Your first birth was a water birth from your mother's womb—Fleshly birth. NOT BAPTISM!
2. Birth #2 (vs. 5-6)— Physical birth put you the earthly kingdom, but not God's kingdom. God's kingdom is spiritual, therefore entrance into it requires a spiritual birth. Paul tells us "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 15:50).
  - Flesh begets flesh—Spirit begets spirit (v. 6)!
  - It is an invisible operation of the Spirit (v. 8).
3. Being "*born again*" is an EVENT, not a process. You were not born gradually. It happened at a certain time and place. The same is true of being born again. There must a time when you were born into the God's family.
  - My birth certificate says I was born the first time December, 26 1947 at Women's Hospital in Detroit, Michigan. I was "born again" in December, 1967 at the Nelson Hotel in Plymouth, Michigan.
  - I can't remember my first birth—but I can't forget my second birth.

**III. Jesus and Nicodemus—HEART to HEART** (vs. 9-21).

A. The SIMPLICITY of the new birth (vs. 9-16). Not complicated.

1. It is NOT by working your way up to heaven (v. 13). Jesus is saying, "You will never climb a ladder into heaven by your own efforts. Instead, come down off the ladder of your own works, and look unto Me who has come down from heaven."

➡ Jesus DID NOT say...

- "Nicodemus, you must quit swearing and smoking."
- "Nick, you must be baptized!"
- "Nick, you must do a better job of keeping the 10 Commandments."

2. It is as simple as a "LOOK" of faith—Believing (vs. 12, 14-18). "believe" is mentioned seven times (God's number).

➡ The new birth is possible through Christ being lifted up on the cross (v. 14 Cf. Num. 21).

- a) All have been bitten by the serpent of sin (Rom. 3:10).
- b) Christ was lifted up on the cross, as the serpent was on the pole. Birth means that somebody had to suffer to give you birth—Your mother / Jesus.
- c) The brazen serpent was a cure for serpent bites—Christ is the cure of sin's poison.
- d) A look of faith cured the serpents poison (Eph. 2:8-9 cf. John 1:12-13)

B. The SIGNS of the new birth (vs. 19-21, esp. v. 21).

1. Nicodemus was changed — The man who was taught by Christ in private, served Christ publicly.

- He publicly defended Him before his peers (John 7:50).
- After Christ's crucifixion, while the disciples were hiding in fear, Nicodemus stepped forward to prepare Christ's body for burial.

2. The new birth makes a person a *new creature* (2 Cor. 5:17).

➡ One who is "born again" has a **new beginning**. "BORN" is used 8 times in our text. "8" the number of NEW BEGINNINGS!

➡ Everything becomes NEW...

- It gave me a new name
- Put me under a new covenant;
- Gave me a new song;
- Made me a citizen of the New Jerusalem;

- I'll spend eternity in a new heaven and new earth. 1st birth brought you INTO this world—the 2nd birth will bring you OUT! You'll be AIR born!
3. A child bears characteristics of their parents. Creatures reproduce "*after their kind*." ("He's just like his father." "She has her mother's eyes.")

---

1 Corinthians 15:47-49—"*The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*"

---

➔ Just as a man receives the nature of his parents in physical birth, so likewise a man becomes partaker of "*the divine nature*" when he is born again (2 Pet. 1:4). How much do you resemble your spiritual Father?

- a) God is Light—*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:* (Eph 5:8)
- b) God is Love— *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.* (1 John 5:1)
- c) God is Spirit— When a person is born again, he will desire spiritual things. A baby desires milk— "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*" (1 Pet. 2:2). Do you have a hunger for the Word?
- d) God is Righteous—*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin...(as a lifestyle), because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* (1 John 3:9-10)

**SUMMATION:** Have you been "born again?" Do you have a second birthday? When is it? How much do you resemble your "heavenly Father?"