

You Must Be Born Again

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[0:00] Let's turn to the passage that we read, John chapter 3 and verse 3. Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Let's look at this encounter between the Lord Jesus Christ and Nicodemus. Let's look at this. In which that great man replied, Because you must be born again. This encounter between Christ and Nicodemus gives us a particular light into what does it mean to be born again. And it should ask us the question, Am I born again? And it should cause another question to be asked.

And that question is this, a question to yourself, to say to yourself, I must be born again. Otherwise, I'm not going to see the kingdom of God.

[1:49] I'm not going to enter in, but I'm not even going to see it. The school teacher used to ask us in school, now, here's a question.

Put up your hands if you know the answer to the question. And the answer, and the question is this, do you want to get to heaven?

Which I presume the answer from every single person in here is, yes, yes, I want to go to heaven, please. This chapter and this encounter between Christ and Nicodemus gives us and sheds wonderful light on what is required to get to heaven.

So let's look at it.

Looking at him from the outside, you would almost say, well, he surely is the last person who needs to be born again. Upright in every way.

[3:24] But as we'll discover Nicodemus, whatever faith he had, it wasn't saving faith. It was a faith that was historical in the sense that he knew the scriptures of the Old Testament.

And in that historical faith, there was an assent. The faith of assent to what was written in the pages of the Old Testament.

A faith of assent that understood the law of God. Us proscribing to him how we must live good works. And if I do these good works, then everything will work out okay in the end.

His righteousness came from good works, from keeping the law. Like many Jews, he was waiting for the promised one.

The Messiah. The anointed one. But a particular type of Messiah. A king who would set them free from the bondage of Rome.

[4:31] There were others waiting as well. But unlike Nicodemus, we read of one waiting for the consolation of Israel.

In Luke's gospel, we read of that man Simeon. Waiting for the consolation of Israel. And what do we read of Simeon in Luke chapter 2 and 22, down to 24 and 26?

We read these things about him. And this was in the context of Mary and Joseph coming with Jesus to the purification that was required as part of the law of Moses.

So they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male person who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord and offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord.

A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.

[5:51] And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And this is it. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, He took him in his arms and said, Blessed God.

And blessed God. And said, Lord, you are now letting your servant depart in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation.

My eyes have seen your salvation. Simeon was waiting. But Simeon understood. And he knew who Christ was. Who this baby Jesus was.

That he was the Christ of God. The one sent from God. To deal with sin. He saw his own saviour.

[7:01] His own saviour. Likewise, I'm always fascinated by the men who came from the east. In Matthew chapter 2. Men came from the east at his birth. Where is the king of the Jews that we may come to worship him?

They came a huge distance. To come to the manger. To come to see Christ. To worship Christ. There was no sign of the Jews. There was no fuss being made by the Jews. By the Sanhedrin. By the elders. By the teachers. No fuss being made.

Because they did not know him. For who he was. John speaks of this. Of course. In this remarkable gospel.

John chapter 1 verse 11. He came to his own. But his own did not receive him. John highlights the tragedy. Of the rejection.

[8:03] By the Jews. Of who Jesus really is. We might translate these words. We might translate these words.

In chapter 1 and verse 11. He came to his own. They could be translated like this. He came home. He came home.

And that word. He came to his own. He came home. And it's the exact expression used. Of the beloved disciple. When in response to Jesus' word from the cross.

He took Mary into his own home. He came. Christ came.

To where the people ought to have known him. They had the scriptures of the Old Testament. That testified of him. That declared him.

[9:05] They of all the people should know. Who he was. But he came to his own. He came home. And his own would not receive it.

They would not receive him. And when you see in chapter 2. Christ coming to the temple. There is a sense in which he is coming home.

This is my father's house. He is about his father's business. And in the process of doing so. He declares himself to be God.

He cleanses the temple. He cleanses the temple. Malachi tells us about this. Malachi chapter 3 and verse 1.

We read these verses. In that remarkable prophecy. Behold I send my messenger. And he will prepare the way before me. That's speaking about John the Baptist.

[10:06] And the Lord whom you seek. Will suddenly come to his temple. And the messenger of the covenant. In whom you delight.

Behold he is coming. Says the Lord of hosts. Well here he is. In his temple. In the house of prayer. Of which Isaiah speaks. My house. Shall be a house of prayer. Isaiah declares. But here it is.

Trade.

It's a house of trade. And he cleanses the temple. That in itself should have been a sign. A sign taking you back to Malachi.

Taking you back to Isaiah. And notice the conversation then. Between Jesus and the Jews. So the Jews said to him.

[11:04] 2.18. What sign do you show us for doing these things? Jesus answered them. Destroy the temple. And in three days I will raise it up. Show us a sign.

By what authority are you doing that? And they treat him with the utmost disrespect. And contempt. And he answers them.

And he answers them. He answers them. And what does he say to them? Destroy this temple. And in three days I will raise it up. Jesus replies.

Telling about his death. And his resurrection. What is he saying to them? He's saying this to them. This temple is where God condescends to be with his people.

This is what I'm saying to you. I am the tabernacle of God in the flesh. I am the Emmanuel presence. In the midst of the pilgrim people of God.

[12:08] I have come to you. I am where God and man meet. I am the mediator between God and man. I am the last Adam.

I've come to deal with sin once and for all. What did John the Baptist see when he saw Jesus? Behold the Lamb of God who takes away sin. Why did he come? Why did Jesus come? To take away sin. To deal with sin. To deal with your sin. And my sin. Once and for all. On Calvary's cross. And it's not that what John is speaking about. The word was made flesh. And dwelt among us. Or tabernacled among us. And here he is. They needed to understand who was standing before them. It tells us in verse 23 of chapter 2.

[13:06] Many believed when they saw the miracles or the signs that he did. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them. What kind of faith did they have?

It wasn't saving faith. It seems to us that it wasn't saving faith. He didn't entrust himself to them. Because he knew what was in their heart. The signs in and of themselves. And the miracles in and of themselves. Speak of him. They speak of him. They point us. They are signs that point us to something. And they're pointing us to him. And who he is. In the glory of his person. And his work. And isn't it interesting in the conversation with Nicodemus. Rabbi. We know you are a teacher come from God. For no one can do these signs that you do.

[14:08] You see. Nicodemus connects the signs. With Christ. What was the purpose of the signs?

Well we read that. What was the purpose of the miracle in Cana of Galilee. When he turned the water into wine. It tells us. This the first of his signs. The first of his signs. Jesus did at Cana in Galilee. And manifested his glory. What was the purpose of the signs? They were to manifest his glory. Who he was. God. Manifest in the flesh. The God. Man. Man. To demonstrate his deity. That he was truly.

[15:02] God. Manifest in the flesh. And he comes to Jesus at night. Whatever the reason that. Was for. Maybe he didn't want to be seen. And as somebody said. I think it was our own former minister. Mr. McKeever. That darkness. Surely. In a sense. Is also. Symbolic. Of the darkness. That was in his heart. And we read about that. In chapter 3. And verse 19. And this is the judgment. The light has come into the world. And people love the darkness. Rather than the light. His soul was dark. His heart was dark. It was darkness. And that's. The truth. About every. Single. Person. In this world. As they are by nature. As they are.

[15:58] Out of Christ. And. Jesus speaks to him. Truly. Truly. I say to you. Unless one is born again. He cannot see the kingdom. Of God. Jesus affirms. The absolute. Necessity. Getting to the heart. Of the matter. Nicodemus. You must be born again. Again. In one sentence. He sweeps away. Everything. That Nicodemus. Stood for. And Christ. Demands. That Nicodemus. Is born again. Just as he demands. And desires. That you're born again. If you're not born again. He demands. He demands. He demands. That he be remade. Remade. Demands. That he. Become a new creation. In Christ Jesus.

[16:53] What does it mean. To be born again. It means. To be born. From above. Born from above. Born. According. To what John tells us. In chapter 1. Verses 12. And 13. But to all who did receive him. That is to all who believe him savingly. But to all who did receive him. Who believed in his name. He gave the right. To become children of God. Who were born. Not of blood. Nor. Of the will of the flesh. Nor of the will of man. But. Of. God. Born. According. To an action. Taken by God. In heaven. Directed. To your soul. Directed. To your heart. Before you can even see.

[17:49] The kingdom. And Nicodemus. Jesus is saying to Nicodemus. Nicodemus. You can't even see it.

And because you can't see it. You can't enter in. This great teaching. This great doctrine. Of the new birth.

Or regeneration. It is for. Your good Nicodemus. You must know Nicodemus. That sin has made you sick.

And you must know. That sickness that is in your heart. Even as it is in the natural world. We go out of our way. Do we not to. Find out what's wrong with us. It's far better to know.

What's wrong with us. So that we can begin treating. What's wrong with us. It's far better for us. For our bodies. For our minds. For our families. The greater the hope then.

[18 : 45] Of getting a cure. Getting a remedy. So it is. Spiritually. We must understand. That by nature. All have sinned.

And come short of the glory of God. Every person. In this world. There is none righteous. Paul writing to the Romans. There is none righteous.

No. Not one. Not one. In verse 4.

Nicodemus said. How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Nicodemus laid great store on his birth.

His first birth and his privileges. And the station in which he found himself. His own self-righteousness.

[19 : 51] Israel. The people of God. I belong to them. We have the Holy Land. We have Jerusalem. The Holy City. We have the scriptures.

Much store in his parentage. Just as the apostle. If anyone could boast. Surely I could boast. In Philippians 3 from 5.

A Pharisee of the Pharisees. Surely I could boast. Of all these privileges. Into which I was born. And which belong to me now. Could he be better born and bred?

But Jesus cuts across. Everything Nicodemus says. To the point where Nicodemus starts saying. How? How can?

How can? How can these things be? Nicodemus is left floundering.

[20 : 56] Floundering. What was the root problem with Nicodemus? It was this. That Nicodemus thought he was already in the kingdom.

He thought he was already in the kingdom. Jesus said to them in Matthew 3.9. Do not presume to say to yourselves.

We have Abraham as our father. But that's the very thing that they were saying. We have Abraham as our father. And Christ dismisses that.

In John chapter 8. Christ dismisses it. And oh how he dismisses it. What does he say to them? You are of your father the devil. That's what he says to them.

You are of your father the devil. The devil. Jesus said to him. To the disciples.

[21 : 57] And to the Jews. For I tell you. God is able from these stones. To raise up children. For Abraham. Our heritage.

Our parentage. Our blood. As John puts it. In this. At verse. 14 of chapter 1. Who were born not of blood.

Nor of the will of the flesh. Nor of the will of man. But of God. Nothing will avail you. When it comes to heaven. Nothing will avail you. When it comes.

To heaven. Nothing will help you. And then Jesus at verse 5. Reaffirms.

Truly, truly I say to you. Unless one is born of water. And the spirit. He cannot enter. The kingdom of God. What is Jesus doing. With Nicodemus. He is preaching the gospel.

[22 : 54] To Nicodemus. What is preaching the gospel. It is declaring the offer. The free offer of the gospel. To sinners. Saying to them.

Come. Come to Jesus. What was Jesus saying to Nicodemus. Nicodemus. Come. He was drawing Nicodemus.

He was drawing him. And he began to use illustrations. Of which Nicodemus. Would have been very familiar. Unless one is born of water.

And the spirit. Water and the spirit. Familiar concepts. To Nicodemus. In terms of the Old Testament.

I will sprinkle clean water on you. And you shall be clean. From all your uncleannesses. And from all your idols. I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart.

[23 : 48] And I will give you a new spirit. And a new spirit. I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone. And give you a heart of flesh. Nicodemus would have known the scriptures.

He would have been familiar with water. Water in and of itself was no use. That had to be the spirit. The spirit. What does the spirit reveal? The word of God.

The word of God. He understood this. Cleansing. But he didn't yet understand.

The work of the Holy Spirit. In giving new life. And he goes on to explain that. In verse 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the spirit.

Is spirit. Flesh is flesh. Sinful nature. Sinful human nature. And the direction. And control. Of sin. Job said in Job 14.

[24 : 48] For who can bring a clean thing. Out of an unclean. Well the answer to that is no one. Except God. God.

And he goes on. Spirit is spirit. What does that mean? It means this. The Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer.

Human nature under the dominance of the Holy Spirit. Human nature once dominated. Controlled by sin. The Holy Spirit. But now the new birth.

Born again. Human nature under the dominance of the Holy Spirit. A spiritual man or woman. And Jesus then begins to get closer and closer to the crux of the matter.

Do not marvel that I said to you at verse 7. You must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear it sound. But you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

[25 : 52] So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Take the wind Nicodemus. Sovereign. Irresistible.

Mysterious. You cannot see it. But you can feel its effects. It affects your senses. And it affects everything. And living in an island community as we do.

Wind when it blows hard. Affects a lot of things. You still can't see it. Sometimes you don't even know where it's coming from. Or where it's going. You may know the general direction.

But you don't really know. So is the sovereign and irresistible and mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.

In the heart of the believer. Giving them a new heart. Making them new creations. Born again.

[26 : 55] Born again. Saved by grace. Saved by grace. Born of the Spirit. Born of.

So it is with everyone. Who is born of the Spirit. And Nicodemus still floundering. How can these things be? And Jesus returns to him.

And says to him. You are the teacher. You are the teacher. It's almost a rebuke. The lack of elementary knowledge of salvation.

The lack of elementary knowledge of salvation. That Nicodemus had. Is striking. This teacher. Of the Old Testament scriptures.

That declares so clearly Christ. We considered this in the morning. Trying to show how. How the Old Testament.

[27 : 56] And the witnesses. The great cloud of witnesses. That you have in Genesis. In Hebrews 11. How their faith was exercised.

In laying hold of the promises. And in laying hold of the Christ of the promise. It wasn't that.

That was. Anything was hidden. In that sense. It was plain. To see. For Nicodemus. And for others. You are the teacher. Jesus answered him.

Are you the teacher of Israel? And yet. You do not understand these things. Truly. Truly. I say to you. We speak of what we know. We bear witness to what we have seen.

But you do not receive. Our testimony. The rejection of the Jews. Of Jesus. He came to his own.

[28 : 58] But his own received him not. They rejected. They rejected. The testimony. The witness. The declarations. Of who Christ.

Is. When he was going to come. How he was going to come. Going to come. Because of their unbelief. They preferred darkness.

To light. They preferred darkness. To light. And then our Lord. Begins. To draw. Nicodemus. Closer.

If I have told you. Earthly things. And you do not believe. How can you believe. If I tell you.

Heavenly things. And he begins. To tell him now. About himself. He begins.

To tell him. About himself. Jesus. Comes. And he says. To Nicodemus. Nicodemus. I came from heaven.

[29 : 59] I have come. I am the son of God. And. I am the son of man. As well. The son of God. And the son of man.

Sent by God. The father. Sent to do. A very. Special work. The son of man. The title. Most used by Christ.

About himself. What does it mean? It means this. At least. There are three elements. In it. At least. One. True. Sinless humanity. A true.

Sinless humanity. Number two. The last. Adam. What does that mean? It means this. The first. Adam. Failed.

Who was going to repair the breach? Who was going to find the remedy for sin? The last Adam. One.

[30 : 55] Who is God. In our nature. The son of man. God. Of very God. Taking our nature to himself.

And being called the son of man. A true. Sinless humanity. The last Adam. And this. The man of sorrows. And acquainted with grief. One who was going to suffer.

And die. And he goes on. As Moses. So must the son of man. As Moses. So must the son of man. Nicodemus would have been familiar with this picture. Thoroughly familiar. With what happened in Numbers. Chapter 21. The serpent. Held up.

To the eyes of the Israel. Israelites. As the symbol. In a sense of their own. Serpent plague. Which had come on them. Through God's. Just.

[31 : 55] Wrath. For their sin. And it was held up. So that by obediently looking at it. They might. Not. Die. They would repent.

Of their sin. And not die. And remember if they didn't. Look. They were going to die. As Moses. So must.

So must. The son. Of man. Christ. Is pointing. Nicodemus. To who he is. And the work.

That he has to do. In both cases. Here. In Numbers. 21. God provides. The remedy. In the case. Here. The son of man. Being lifted up. As we have it in John chapter 12. And verse 32. And that remarkable. Verse. I.

[32 : 51] It says. Jesus is speaking. And I. When I am lifted up from the earth. Will draw all people. To myself. He said this.

To show. By what kind of death. He was going. To die. He was going to be lifted up. Onto the cross of Calvary.

To die. In the place of sinners. Like you. And me. So that there would be a salvation. So that there would be a gospel. So that there would be a salvation.

That there would be. The power of God. From on high. Taking away the heart of stone. And giving us a heart of flesh. That we might be born again.

By the Holy Spirit. Christ on the cross. The remedy for sin. Nicodemus. You must look to me. You must know who I am.

[33 : 49] And this passage is. Inextricably linked. To that wonderful verse. In John 3.16. Look how that verse begins.

For. For. It links. Back to the narrative. That we are speaking of. For God so loved the world.

That he gave his only son. That whoever believes in him. Should not perish. But have eternal life. Nicodemus. I'm drawing you.

I'm calling you. And I'm telling you this. Nicodemus. It's all about love. The gospel is all about love. God so loved the world.

That he gave his only begotten son. He. Draws. Nicodemus. To the greatest display.

[34 : 50] Of love. Ever. The greatest. Display. Of love. Ever. Martin Luther said. On John 3.16.

They flow like milk and honey. Words. Which are able to make the sad. Happy. The dead. Alive. If only the heart.

Believes them. Firmly. That whosoever. Nicodemus.

Are you in the whosoever. When the gospel call goes out. The free offer of the gospel. In which we believe. It's to the whosoever.

We don't know. God knows. But we don't know. Our duty. Is to preach the gospel. To every single soul. To you. To all who might be online.

[35 : 47] Week in. Week out. During the week. Preach the gospel. Whosoever. And let God have the glory. The Philippian jailer asked Paul.

What must I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you will be saved. What's the reply?

And that's the same response. That we could give Nicodemus. Nicodemus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe in this great love. The love. The love.

The love. With which God so loved the world. That he gave his only son. The love of the son. In going to Calvary. Willingly. Bearing out sins. Bearing out guilt.

Bearing out punishment. And taking away. All of these things. And giving his life. That shall never end. Eternal life. And he warns Nicodemus.

[36 : 52] Verse 18. Whoever believes in him. Is not condemned. But whoever does not believe. Is condemned already. Is there a more tragic situation.

That somebody who knows the truth. And doesn't realize that they're under condemnation. And doesn't realize that the remedy is there. On the cross of Calvary.

For their sins. That's a tragedy. What about you?

Are you born again? Do you know Christ? Do you know the Christ of God? As he is revealed here. As he reveals himself. As he draws. Nicodemus. You may be sitting here thinking. Oh yes. I remember.

[37 : 53] I remember that. I remember that I was being drawn. By the preaching of the word. I remember those days. They were exciting. They were amazing.

Amazing. And if you're saying that. That's wonderful. I was thinking.

Listening to Reverend Roddy McRae. Last week. Speaking so passionately. About his own salvation. It's almost as if he was saying.

I just can't get over. That Christ has saved me. I can't get over it. And I hope that he never does.

And I hope that I never do.

And I hope that you never will. Where do we see Nicodemus? What happened to him? What happened to Nicodemus?

[38 : 51] Praise be to God. John chapter 19 verse 39. John 19 and verse 39.

We'll read at 38. After these things. Joseph of Arimathea. Who was a disciple of Jesus. But secretly for fear of the Jews. Asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave him permission.

So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also. Nicodemus also. Nicodemus also.

Who earlier had come to Jesus by night. Came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes. About 75 pounds in weight. Not that long ago.

I spoke about one who came. Anointing the Lord's body. A memorial. To what she did. Her love. Of the Savior.

[40 : 02] I think we can plainly see. Nicodemus here. Born again.

Born again. Surely we can see in it. The strength. Of his love. For the Christ with which he had an encounter.

The Christ with which he had an encounter. And who changed his life. Just as it has changed every believer's life.

What a discovery for Nicodemus. What a discovery. And that discovery awaits you. If you come to know Christ.

As your own Savior. Will you not come? Will you not come? Amen. May the Lord bless these thoughts on his word.

[41 : 09] Our final singing is Psalm 40. The Sing Psalms version. On page 50. Psalm 40.

Page 50. Singing verses 1 to 5. I waited long upon the Lord. I wonder if Nicodemus sang this song. I wonder if he sang these psalms. That belonged to them. Psalms that were full of Christ. When he was singing them. That he was seeing Christ. That he was seeing Christ.

And seeing in it for the first time. Yes. Yes. This is speaking of Christ. He set my feet on solid rock. A place to stand both firm and broad. He put a new song in my mouth. A joyful hymn of praise to God. Many will look with godly fear.

[42 : 12] And on the Lord alone rely. Blessed are they who trust the Lord. Who shun the proud. And gods that lie. The wonders that you have done. O Lord.

How many. And how great they are. Your plans for us. Are far beyond our power. To number. Or declare.

To God's praise. Standing to sing. I waited long.

Upon the Lord. He heard my cry. And turned to me.
He raised me from the slimy pit. And from the my.
[43 : 13] He pulled me free. He set my feet. He set my feet. A solid rock.
A place to stand. O firm and broad. He put a new song in my mouth.
A joyful hymn of praise to God. Many will look with godly fear.
And on the Lord. Blessed are they who trust the Lord.
Who shun the proud. And gods that high. The wonders you have done.
[44 : 43] How many and how great they are. Your plans for us.
Our power to number. To number. To number. Our glory. Our glory. Our glory. Gracious God, part
us now with your blessing.
Help us as we leave this place to know that we have been with the Lord in his house, with his
people, around his word.
And oh, come with power, we pray. Bless all that was done today. Help us and ever, ever keep us
by the power of your grace.
In Christ's name we ask all these things. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
[46 : 09]