

John 3

We have seen Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana, and the first Passover of Jesus' earthly ministry. It is now, that we come to a very familiar passage - John 3.

I. THE INQUIRY OF A RULER v.1-2

- 1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:**
- 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.**

V1- "A man of the Pharisees" – The most well known enemies of Jesus
"Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews" – One of the Sanhedrin

A person of the name of Nicodemus, the son of Gorion, the brother of Josephus ben Gorion, is mentioned in the Jewish writings, who lived in the time of Vespasian, and was reputed to be so rich that he could support all the inhabitants of Jerusalem for ten years. But this is said in their usual extravagant mode of talking.

"There was the case of the daughter of Naqdimon b. Gurion, for whom sages allowed four hundred golden denars for her perfume basket for that one day, and she said to them, 'May you do the same for your own daughters!' and they answered her, 'So be it.'" - **Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 6:4**

"He sent against them Caesar Vespasian. He came and besieged Jerusalem for three years. There were in the city three nobles, Naqdimon ben Gurion, Ben Kalba Sabua, and Ben Sisit Hakkeset." - **Babylonian Talmud Mishnah-Tractate Gittin 5:6 I.5**

(Vespasian ruled Rome from AD 69 - AD 79)

"Just as the sun stood still for Joshua, so the sun stood still for Moses and for Naqdimon b. Gurion. While for Joshua there are verses of Scripture to indicate that fact, and while for Naqdimon b. Gurion there is a tradition, how do we know that fact in the case of Moses?" - **Babylonian Talmud Mishnah-Tractate Gittin 5:6 I.22.B**

Νίκη - "Nike" Victor or Conqueror, Δημοσ - "demos" the people

Why did Nicodemus come to Jesus at night?

- He was afraid of judgment from his peers
- He was too busy during the day
- Jesus was too busy during the day

The answer is most likely the first, and possibly the second and/or third influenced his timing as well. Jesus does not condemn him for this, so neither should we.

B. What miracles is Nicodemus referring to?

- The events of John 3 seem to occur shortly after the events of John 2.
- Nicodemus likely saw or even heard of Jesus for the first time - at the Passover celebration in Jerusalem. It is the unspecified miracles that Jesus did at the Passover that Nicodemus is referring to (2:23). They are probably having this discussion in Jerusalem.

II. THE ANSWER OF THE MESSIAH v. 3-9

- 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** Jesus doesn't directly address Nicodemus' comment. Instead, as only He could - He pinpoints Nicodemus' need.
- 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?**
- 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** These verses have been twisted and misinterpreted by many in Catholicism and Protestantism.

"It is true that, by neglecting baptism, we are excluded from salvation; and in this sense I acknowledge that it is necessary..." - John Calvin

"It is this one Spirit who makes it possible for an infant to be regenerated through the agency of another's will when that infant is brought to Baptism..."Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit." The water, therefore, manifesting exteriorly the sacrament of grace, and the Spirit effecting interiorly the benefit of grace, both regenerate in one Christ that man who was generated in one Adam." - St. Augustine, (Letter to Boniface. 98, 2)

Catholics and Protestants agree that to be saved, you have to be born again. Jesus said so: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

"When a Catholic says that he has been "born again," he refers to the transformation that God's grace accomplished in him during baptism. Evangelical Protestants typically mean something quite different when they talk about being "born again."

For an Evangelical, becoming "born again" often happens like this: He goes to a crusade or a revival where a minister delivers a sermon telling him of his need to be "born again."

"If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe he died for your sins, you'll be born again!" says the preacher. So the gentleman makes "a decision for Christ" and at the altar call goes forward to be led in "the sinner's prayer" by the minister. Then the minister tells all who prayed the sinner's prayer that they have been saved—"born again." But is the minister right? Not according to the Bible."

- <https://www.catholic.com/tract/are-catholics-born-again>

"Born of water" is *not* water baptism, but rather, being born physically. This is in reference to the liquid environment of the womb. Verse 6 in conjunction with verse 4 makes this abundantly clear.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (v. 4,5)

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. This is absolutely necessary.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. It is interesting to note that the Greek word for wind, πνεῦμα "Pneuma" as well as the Hebrew word רוח "Ruach" both are also used for the word "Spirit".

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Nicodemus is confused.

III. THE BACKGROUND OF THE NEW BIRTH v.10

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

A "circumcised heart" was the Old Testament equivalent of being "born again". This was not the same thing. It was a heart surrendered to the Lord. (Psalm 51:1-10)

Deu 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

Jer 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

Jer 31:33, 34 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Eze 11:19-21 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord GOD.

Eze 36:25-27 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

IV. THE CONTEXT OF JOHN 3:16 v.14-18

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: (Numbers 21:4-9)

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

This is the antidote for Genesis 2:16,17

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

IVa. - AN EXCURSUS ON "LIFE AND DEATH" Deuteronomy 30

Background: Moses is talking to the Children of Israel about following the Law of God

- In this chapter God uses Hebrew parallelism to show what He means by "life and death"

1. A SIMPLE DEFINITION

- v15 A. Good and Evil
- v19 B. Blessing and cursing

2. A SCRIPTURALEXAMPLE "Surely Die" (4 views for death) Gen 2:16,17

- A. **spiritual death**- they died spiritually as soon as they ate.
- B. **physical death stressing mortality**- you become mortal if you eat the fruit.
- C. **the decaying process.**
- D. The above views all have truth to them , but it is probable that this is speaking of **separation from the blessings of Eden.(the presence of God)**

1. Very frequently OT and the NT life and death terminology has to do with fullness of experience and fullness of blessing.
2. This would also foreshadow being cut off from the tabernacle and the temple. The temple represents God's presence. **Eden** is full of **symbols that represent the presence of God**
3. In Israelite worship, true life was experienced when one came to the sanctuary. **For the Israelite, to enter the sanctuary was to enter the fullness of life** To enter the sanctuary is to be into the life realm. To be expelled from the sanctuary was to enter into the death realm because you were being cut off from the truest form of life. This is why lepers are told to mourn when they are expelled/excommunicated from the fullness of life associated with normal life and temple worship.

[John 1:4](#) In him was [life](#); and the [life](#) was the light of men.

[John 3:15](#) That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal [life](#).

[John 3:16](#) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting [life](#).

[John 3:36](#) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting [life](#): and he that believeth not the Son shall not see [life](#); but the wrath of God abideth on him.

- [John 4:14](#) But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting [life](#).
- [John 4:36](#) And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto [life](#) eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.
- [John 5:24](#) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting [life](#), and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto [life](#).
- [John 5:26](#) For as the Father hath [life](#) in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have [life](#) in himself;
- [John 5:29](#) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of [life](#); and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.
- [John 5:39](#) Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal [life](#): and they are they which testify of me.
- [John 5:40](#) And ye will not come to me, that ye might have [life](#).
- [John 6:27](#) Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting [life](#), which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.
- [John 6:33](#) For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth [life](#) unto the world.
- [John 6:35](#) And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of [life](#): he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.
- [John 6:40](#) And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting [life](#): and I will raise him up at the last day.
- [John 6:47](#) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting [life](#).
- [John 6:48](#) I am that bread of [life](#).
- [John 6:51](#) I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the [life](#) of the world.
- [John 6:63](#) It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are [life](#).
- [John 6:68](#) Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal [life](#).
- [John 8:12](#) Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of [life](#).
- [John 10:10](#) The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have [life](#), and that they might have *it* more abundantly.
- [John 10:28](#) And I give unto them eternal [life](#); and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.
- [John 11:25](#) Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the [life](#): he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

- [John 14:6](#) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the [life](#): no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
- [John 17:2](#) As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal [life](#) to as many as thou hast given him.
- [John 17:3](#) And this is [life](#) eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.
- [John 20:31](#) But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have [life](#) through his name.
- [Acts 11:18](#) When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto [life](#).
- [Rom 5:17](#) For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in [life](#) by one, Jesus Christ.)
- [Rom 5:18](#) Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of [life](#).
- [Rom 5:21](#) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal [life](#) by Jesus Christ our Lord.
- [Rom 6:4](#) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of [life](#).
- [Rom 6:22](#) But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting [life](#).
- [Rom 6:23](#) For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal [life](#) through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- [Rom 8:2](#) For the law of the Spirit of [life](#) in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.
- [Rom 8:6](#) For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* [life](#) and peace.
- [Rom 8:10](#) And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* [life](#) because of righteousness.
- [2 Cor 3:6](#) Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth [life](#).
- [2 Cor 5:4](#) For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of [life](#).
- [Gal 3:21](#) *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given [life](#), verily righteousness should have been by the law.
- [Gal 6:8](#) For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap [life](#) everlasting.
- [Col 3:4](#) When Christ, *who is* our [life](#), shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.
- [2 Tim 1:1](#) PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of [life](#) which is in Christ Jesus,

- [2 Tim 1:10](#) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought [life](#) and immortality to light through the gospel:
- [2 Pet 1:3](#) According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto [life](#) and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:
- [1 John 1:1](#) THAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of [life](#);
- [1 John 1:2](#) (For the [life](#) was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal [life](#), which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)
- [1 Jn 3:14](#) We know that we have passed from death unto [life](#), because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.
- [1 Jn 5:11](#) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal [life](#), and this [life](#) is in his Son.
- [1 Jn 5:12](#) He that hath the Son hath [life](#); *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not [life](#).
- [1 Jn 5:20](#) And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal [life](#).
- [Jude 21](#) keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal [life](#).
- [Rev 20:15](#) And whosoever was not found written in the book of [life](#) was cast into the lake of fire.
- [Rev 21:27](#) And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of [life](#).
- [Rev 22:1](#) And he shewed me a pure river of water of [life](#), clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
- [Rev 22:2](#) In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of [life](#), which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Jesus will return as the King of Kings and Judge of all. At His first coming, He came as the Lamb - the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Those without Christ, stand condemned already. This is parallel to Romans 1:18-23 ;2:12-16

What does "begotten" mean? Ps 2:7