

(1) Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

(3) Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

(5) Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

(9) Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?”

(10) 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, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.”

Think on these things:

- 1) Nicodemus was a religious leader of the Jews, and here we see him as a sincere seeker of God’s truth. Is Jesus introducing to him a new idea to the Jewish understanding of God’s salvation, i.e., being “born from above” or “born again”? If yes, why was Jesus disappointed in him?

New teaching? **Yes** Why was Jesus disappointed? **If a Jewish religious leader couldn’t grasp this basic truth Jesus introduced, how could he ever teach it to the Jewish people?**

- 2) Let’s look into the Jewish idea of how one gets saved. Considering Genesis 15:1, 5-6 and Isaiah 51:1-2, 16, Jews believed “what” would save them (alone)?

The Jews believed that all of them would be saved because they were: **the physical children (descendants) of Abraham, and thus God’s chosen and special people in our world.**

- 3) What did Jesus say to the Pharisees in John 8:37-47 to refute this (erroneous) belief?

Jesus knew they felt entitled due to their descendancy from Abraham, but He confronted them for disbelief in Him. He said that if they were “truly” from Abraham, they would believe in the Father’s work and words Jesus brought to them. Because they rejected Him, He told them their true father was actually the Devil, and that they were “not of God” at all. (v.47)

- 4) Read Romans 4:1-3, 13-14 and 20-21 with Romans 11:1-2a. What does Paul say about Abraham being saved?

Abraham “believed” God and it was counted to him as righteousness. It was not about works. Romans 11 goes on to say that the children of Abraham are “people of faith,” not his physical descendants, and that Abraham’s true children are comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles!!

- 5) How does all this impact the idea that if someone comes from the right kind of family they will be saved, too? What do you understand about how you, personally, can be saved by Jesus?

Impact? – **A good family doesn't save me, nor does a bad family condemn me. It comes down to my own personal faith in or rejection of Jesus, not my family upbringing or belief system.**

Me personally? – **If I want to be saved by Jesus, I must come to personal faith in Him. It doesn't matter what my mom or dad, brother or sister, grandparents or spouse believes(d).**

- 6) Jesus said to Nicodemus that unless a person experienced “two” births, s/he could never see or enter the Kingdom of God. What are the two types of birth? Jesus refers to them as water/flesh birth (vs. 5-6) and above/Spirit birth (vs.3, 5).

Water/Flesh birth = **Natural, human birth from our mothers.**

Above/Spirit birth = **A new birth (life) based on faith in God's plan, accomplished by God.**

- 7) How would you describe these two requirements to a friend today?
Personal question. You are looking for class members to acknowledge that faith in God must be accompanied by a “new birth”, God coming into and abiding within a new believer. God then works within that believer's heart to conform him/her into the image of His Son, Jesus.

- 8) Which person of the Christian Trinity is involved in “birth from above”, the spiritual birth (vs.5-6)? What do you think the illustration of the wind means in regards to spiritual birth?

Trinity Person? **The Holy Spirit accomplishes new birth (creates a new life) in new believers.**

Illustration means? **We don't really know where the wind comes from or where it goes. Likewise, we don't know to whom God the Spirit will come or where He will go next to bring new birth and new life to people. We are the message-bearers; the H.S. rewards faith w/life.**

- 9) Nicodemus was still confused. He asked, “How can this be” (v.9, NIV)? Jesus responded, “You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things (v.10, NIV)? Try and explain why Jesus was again disappointed in Nicodemus (vs.10-12).

Jewish leaders rejected Jesus' teachings in general. Nicodemus was different, more open to Jesus. Yet if new birth was beyond his comprehension, how could he grasp and convey even deeper teachings about heaven, salvation, the Son of Man, and our Heavenly Father?

- 10) Read Numbers 21:4-9. Describe the event with Moses that Jesus refers to. This points to what Jesus is yet to do for the whole world. What is promised to those who believe in the Son of Man (Jesus), who was in heaven and “descended from heaven”?

Event in Numbers – **When the Israelites spoke evil against the Lord, He sent fiery serpents into the camp to bite and kill them. When they showed repentance, He directed Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole. All who were bitten and looked at it, would not die. Jesus said this imagery was a precursor to Him being lifted up (on a cross), bringing salvation.**

Jesus' Promise? **Whoever believes in Him (Jesus) may have eternal life.**

Are you “born from above”, “born again”? This is the only way to experience the Kingdom of God!
People and situations I want to pray for this week: