

The Gospel of John

Chapter 3, Verses 1-8

Review

- General Introduction to the **Gospel of John**
 - one of the five ***Johannine*** books, all of which are among the last books in the Bible to have been written
 - one of the four ***gospels***, each of which is a biography of Jesus and an historical narrative of his life
 - originally written in Greek ***to Jews and Gentiles***, including but not limited to those who had already accepted Christ
 - First read within the context of ***early Christian literature***, the ***Jewish Bible*** and ***other*** religious and philosophical writing.

Review

- **Prolog (1:1-18)**
 - Jesus Christ was the Word become flesh (1:14).
 - “**Flesh**” emphasizes that Jesus was exactly what we are.
 - The Word (Greek, **Logos**) was what God was and did what God did from the beginning.
 - God is full of **grace** and **truth** as revealed in Jesus.
 - He is **rejected by the world**, in general.
 - But he is **the savior of all who receive him**.

Review

- **Jesus was revealed to Israel by John the Baptist (1:19-34)**
- **Disciples began to follow Jesus (1:35-51)**
- **Jesus did his first sign at Cana of Galilee (2:1-11)**
- **Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem (2:12-22)**
- **Jesus performed signs in Jerusalem (2:23-25)**
 - Many saw these signs and believed
 - But Jesus did not entrust himself to them
 - Because he knew what was in the hearts of men

Discussion

- In the baptism of John, the willingness of his disciples to follow, the faithfulness of his mother, the obedience of the wedding servants, the cleansing of the temple, and the signs he performed, Jesus' divinity was on display.
- Furthermore all he did was consistent with scripture.
- Yet seeing these signs, many people still did not believe.
- Even to those who saw these signs and believed on Jesus' name, Jesus does not entrust himself .
- Why?

John 3:1-8

3:1パリサイ人のひとりで、その名をニコデモというユダヤ人の指導者があった。

3:2この人が夜イエスのもとにきて言った、「先生、わたしたちはあなたが神からこられた教師であることを知っています。神がご一緒でないなら、あなたがなさっておられるようなしるしは、だれにもできはしません」。

John 3:1-8

3:3 イエスは答えて言われた、「よくよくあなたに言うておく。だれでも新しく生れなければ、神の国を見ることはできない」。

3:4 ニコデモは言った、「人は年をとってから生れることが、どうしてできますか。もう一度、母の胎にはいって生れることができますでしょうか」。

3:5 イエスは答えられた、「よくよくあなたに言うておく。だれでも、水と霊とから生れなければ、神の国にはいることはできない。

John 3:1-8

3:6肉から生れる者は肉であり、霊から生れる者は霊である。

3:7あなたがたは新しく生れなければならないと、わたしが言ったからとて、不思議に思うには及ばない。

3:8風は思いのままに吹く。あなたはその音を聞くが、それがどこからきて、どこへ行くかは知らない。霊から生れる者もみな、それと同じである」。

John 3:1-8

1. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.
2. 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."

John 3:1-8

4. 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.
6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:1-8

7. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'
8. 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."

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Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

- At the end of Chapter 2, remember, we were told that “many believed Jesus’ name when they saw the signs that he was doing” but that Jesus did not “entrust himself to them” because he “knew what was in man.”

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Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

- Now we have one man set before us as an example.

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- Now we have one man set before us as an example.
- The Greek word here translated as “now” may possibly also take the meaning “but.”

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Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

- Now we have one man set before us as an example.
- The Greek word here translated as “now” may possibly also take the meaning “but,” in which case this man is set forth in contrast to those at the end of Chapter 2.

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Now there was a man of the **Pharisees** named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

- The man we are now asked to consider was one of the group of men known as Pharisees.

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- The man we are now asked to consider was one of the group of men known as Pharisees.
- Pharisees were greatly esteemed by the Jews for their knowledge of scripture and for their obedient lifestyle.

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Now there was a man of the **Pharisees** named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

- Remember (1:24) it was the “from the Pharisees” that the Levites and priests had been sent to question John.

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- Remember (1:24) it was the “from the Pharisees” that the Levites and priests had been sent to question John.
- The Apostle Paul had been from the Pharisees as was his teacher, Gamaliel, who defended the Apostles in Acts 5.

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Now there was a man of the **Pharisees** named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

- Yet it was men of the Pharisees who so frequently troubled Jesus and misunderstood his teaching.

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- Yet it was men of the Pharisees who so frequently troubled Jesus and misunderstood his teaching.
- And it was the Pharisees whom Jesus so harshly reproved, especially in what we read in the synoptic gospels.

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- So I think it would be fair to say that, as a group, the Pharisees represented what was best and worst in Israel.

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- So I think it would be fair to say that, as a group, the Pharisees represented what was best and worst in Israel.
- Here we are asked to consider one of their number named Nicodemus.

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Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

- Nicodemus was a fairly common name and several from that time are known to us from secular history, however there is no way to be certain whether any of those men and the one mentioned here are the same person.

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- Nicodemus is mentioned here and (favorably) in **John 7:50 and 19:39** where he makes some effort to defend Jesus when he is being questioned by the Pharisees shortly before his death and then later arranged for Jesus' burial.

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- We are therefore probably suppose to understand that Nicodemus was one of the Jews who finally did come to faith in Christ.

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- Nicodemus is here also described as a “ruler of the Jews” which almost certainly means that he was a member of the Jewish ruling council or *Sanhedrin*, which would later play a central role in persecuting and crucifying Christ.

John 3:2

この人が夜イエスのもとにきて言った、「先生、わたしたちはあなたが神からこられた教師であることを知っています。神がご一緒でないなら、あなたがなさっておられるようなしるしは、だれにもできはしません」。

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."

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- It is this man, Nicodemus, who now approaches Jesus.

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- It is this man, Nicodemus, who now approaches Jesus.
- He comes to Jesus by night.

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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."

- Why are we told that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night?

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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."

- Why are we told that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?
 - Maybe he was afraid to be seen talking to Jesus.

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- Why are we told that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?
 - Maybe he was afraid to be seen talking to Jesus.
 - Darkness may symbolize ignorance and evil.

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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."

- Why are we told that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?
 - Perhaps Nicodemus just wanted time alone with Jesus.

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- Why are we told that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?
 - Perhaps Nicodemus just wanted time alone with Jesus.
 - Perhaps several of these things are true.

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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."

- Nicodemus addresses Jesus as "Rabbi."

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- Nicodemus addresses Jesus as "Rabbi."
- Jesus' disciples have already used this form of address, and others much more exalted.

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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."

- Coming from a Pharisee who was a member of the Sanhedrin, this form of address might have been considered surprisingly respectful.

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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."

- Nicodemus is at least formally putting Jesus on his own level ... i.e. as a master and teacher of the people.

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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."

- Nicodemus is not speaking just for himself, but on behalf of others as well.

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- On behalf of what group is Nicodemus speaking?

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- On behalf of what group is Nicodemus speaking?
 - The “many” who have seen and “believed the signs” (2:23)

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- On behalf of what group is Nicodemus speaking?
 - The “many” who have seen and “believed the signs” (2:23)
 - Possibly including others among the Pharisees and Sanhedrin

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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."

- The group for whom Nicodemus speaks understand that Jesus is "a teacher come from God" which probably means they regard him as a **true prophet of the God of Israel**.

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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.**"

- Their understanding that Jesus is a true prophet of God derives from the **signs** that Jesus has performed.

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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.**"

- Their understanding that Jesus is a true prophet of God derives from the signs that Jesus has performed but, **also** I think, from their knowledge of Biblical law and prophecy.

John 3:3

イエスは答えて言われた、「よくよくあなたに言うておく。だれでも新しく生れなければ、神の国を見ることはできない」。

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- The teachings of the Bible and some miracles brought Nicodemus (and a group of like minded men) to Jesus.

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- The teachings of the Bible and some miracles brought Nicodemus (and a group of like minded men) to Jesus.
- This is what the Bible and miracles are **supposed** to do!

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- Jesus “who knows what was in man” answered in a way that they were not expecting and could not understand.

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Jesus answered him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you**, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- Jesus “who knows what was in man” answered in a way that they were not expecting and could not understand.
- He wants them to know how important the answer is.

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the **kingdom of God.**"

- Jesus knows that they are seeking the “kingdom of God,” but do not rightly understand what this means.

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the **kingdom of God.**"

- Jesus knows that they are seeking the “kingdom of God,” but do not rightly understand what this means.
- Interestingly this expression, “kingdom of God,” appears only twice in the Gospel of John, both times in Chapter 3.

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- Rather than “kingdom of God” (an expression used very often in the Synoptic Gospels) John most often uses the term “eternal life” perhaps to overcome the confusion of men like Nicodemus.

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- To say that men “cannot see” the kingdom of God (eternal life) is the same as saying they “cannot enter” it.

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- To say that men “cannot see” the kingdom of God (eternal life) is the same as saying they “cannot enter” it, unless they are “born again.”

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- The expression here translated “born again” may also be translated “born from above.”

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- The Greek takes both meanings.

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Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- The expression here translated “born again” may also be translated “born from above.”
- The Greek takes both meanings, and it seems that John intended for to reader to perceive both meanings.

John 3:4

ニコデモは言った、「人は年をとってから生れることが、どうしてできますか。もう一度、母の胎にはいって生れることができますか」。

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?"

John 3:4

ニコデモは言った、「人は年をとってから生れることが、どうしてできますか。もう一度、母の胎にはいって生れることができますか」。

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?"

- So what does it mean for a man to be born again and from above?

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- So what does it mean for a man to be born again and from above?
- Clearly it does **not** mean entering into his mothers womb and from there being “born again” for a “second time.

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- But if that is not what it means, then what does it mean?
- In what sense can an adult be born again from above unto eternal life in the kingdom of God --- that is the question!

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Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

- Jesus acknowledges the importance of the question.

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- Jesus acknowledges the importance of the question.
- He answers that the birth required (to enter the kingdom of God and eternal life) is a birth “of water and the Spirit.”

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- We will return to the question of what is meant by “born of water.”

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- The Spirit means God himself, the Holy Spirit.
- Here Jesus teaches that in order to enter eternal life in the kingdom of God, we must first be born of the Holy Spirit.
- The reason for this is explained in the following verse.

John 3:6

肉から生れる者は肉であり、霊から生れる者は霊である。

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

- Flesh can give birth only to flesh, and all flesh dies.

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That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

- Flesh can give birth only to flesh, and all flesh dies.
- Therefore if wish to live forever in the kingdom of God, we must first somehow become spiritual beings, which means that we must somehow be born of God, the Holy Spirit.

John 3:7

あなたがたは新しく生れなければならないと、わたしが言ったからとて、不思議に思うには及ばない。

Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

- Nicodemus should not be surprised.

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- It is fairly obvious that flesh cannot live with God eternally.
- We need to acquire spiritual bodies somehow.
- This is the spiritual birth of which Jesus speaks.

John 3:8

風は思いのままに吹く。あなたはその音を聞くが、それがどこからきて、どこへ行くかは知らない。霊から生れる者もみな、それと同じである」。

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.“

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- This spiritual birth is accomplished by God by means far beyond our understanding and control, but not beyond our perception.
- A good metaphor for this is the wind.

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- Both are unpredictable, variable, uncontrollable, invisible, but perceptible, and powerful in their effect upon us.

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- He literally recreates us as an eternal spiritual being.

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- Hopefully we are beginning to understand what Jesus meant when he said we must be born of the Spirit if we are to enter the kingdom of God.
- What does water have to do with anything?

Born of Water and the Spirit

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 - In John 3:22 and following we see Jesus and his disciples also baptizing with water.
- Probably Jesus words in John 3:5 refer to Christian baptism, in which water is the external sign of the spiritual birth accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

Born of Water and the Spirit

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- Furthermore Jesus reference to a new birth in water and the Spirit may capture the spirit of Ezek. 36:25-27 and other passages from the Old Testament which speak of a final cleansing and spiritual restoration of God's people.

Next Week's Reading

- John 3:9-21