

BORN AGAIN

John 3:1-21



SYNOPSIS

The context of the most famous verse of the Bible (3:16) comes out of a late-night conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Pharisee who was the cream of the crop of Jewish society. Nicodemus was one of 71 members of the Sanhedrin (i.e. the Supreme Court of his time). This conversation became part of John's case for belief in Jesus as the Messiah who grants eternal life.



OUTLINE

1

BEING BORN AGAIN REQUIRES THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Nicodemus's paradigm included the following points:

- God's Spirit interacts with kings and prophets.
- Nicodemus was an insider in God's Kingdom because keeping and teaching God's Law equates to righteousness.
- Birth determines your lot in life, and male Jewish Pharisees have the best lot.

Jesus's teaching destroyed every point of this paradigm. He says that the Spirit can interact with anyone. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he's not an insider because he hasn't been "born again". None of his accomplishments/status mattered. Jesus echoes Is 44:3 and Ez 36:24-27 to emphasize the importance of the human heart. Membership in the Kingdom of God is based on having a heart transformed by the mysterious, powerful Holy Spirit who moves like the wind.

2

BEING BORN AGAIN REQUIRES GAZING UPON JESUS

Nicodemus was shocked to hear Jesus's words, but Jesus implies that Nicodemus should have known all of this already. Jewish society expected a political Messiah, not the one prophesied in scripture. Jesus references the story where Moses makes a bronze snake and puts it on a pole for the Israelites to be healed from their snake bites (Num 21:6-9). Gazing upon the bronze snake saved them. This reference foreshadowed Jesus's crucifixion. Jesus took on the very thing that was causing us to die and invites us to gaze upon him to receive healing/restoration in exchange.

Is 53:2-6 describes a Messiah who would not naturally inspire confidence. He was vulnerable, physically unremarkable, ostracized, and somewhat repulsive. Yet he was pierced and crushed for our salvation. Even if it feels unnatural, we are still invited to gaze upon him as if our lives depended on it. "By his wounds, we are healed."

The Greek word "for" (first word of 3:16) can be translated as "the manner in which". The manner in which God loved the world was put on full display in sending his one and only Son and allowing whoever believed in him to have fullness of the life he intended for us.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Are there aspects of your paradigm/worldview that you feel Jesus challenging?

2

Are you "born again"? How do you know?

3

How do you respond to John 3:16? What needs to happen for you to receive it as a "25-word parade of hope"? (Max Lucado)

4

Why might it have been difficult for the Israelites to look at the bronze snake? What makes it difficult to gaze upon Jesus?

5

Do you know anyone who fits the description in Is 53:2-3? How could you honor them the way you would honor Jesus?



BIG IDEA

There's a Nicodemus in every one of us.

- Are we open to the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts?
- When opportunities for repentance arise, do we thank God for exposing the grotesqueness of our iniquity? Do we gaze upon it as it hangs on Jesus who bore it (away) for us?

