



Ye Must Be Born Again (From Above)

John 3

- ✦ Nicodemus—vs. 1–21
- ✦ John the Baptist—vs. 22–36

answered and said
Verily, verily, I say
Except a man be
born again, he cannot see the
kingdom of God.

ch. 1:13
 saith unto
 a man be born
 can he enter
 into his moth-
 er's womb and be born?
Verily,
I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Mark 16:16
Whoever believeth in the Son of God, he shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

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.

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

18 ¶ He that believeth in the Son of God, he shall not come into condemnation, but he that doth not believe in the Son of God, he shall come into condemnation, because he hath not believed in the Son of God which is come into the world.

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 witness, that I
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John 3

If you could
sit down and
talk with
Jesus, what
would you ask
him or want to
talk about?



Behold, I stand at
the door, and
knock: if any man
hear my voice, and
open the door, I will
come in to him, and
will sup with him,
and he with me.
(Revelation 3:20)



“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

Thus the world's Redeemer illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart.

(TMK 55.2)



I saw that many have so much rubbish piled up at the door of their heart that they cannot get the door open. Some have difficulties between themselves and their brethren to remove. Others have evil tempers, selfish covetousness, to remove before they can open the door. Others have rolled the world before the door of their heart, which bars the door. All this rubbish must be taken away, and then they can open the door and welcome the Saviour in. (*1 T 143.2*)



In the divine arrangement
God does nothing without
the cooperation of man.
He compels no man's will.
That must be given to the
Lord completely, else the
Lord is not able to
accomplish His divine
work that He would do
through the human
agency. (*TMK 55.4*)



The door. There are doors in Scripture that God has control of—in v. 8 and in Luke 13:25, but this door is under the control of man. Each person opens or shuts it at will.

The potter cannot mold
and fashion unto honor
that which has never been
placed in his hands. The
Christian life is one of
daily surrender,
submission, and continual
overcoming, gaining fresh
victories every day. This is
the growing up into Christ,
fashioning the life into the
divine Model. (*TMK 55.4*)



Nicodemus

- ✦ High position of trust
- ✦ Highly educated
- ✦ Possessed talents of no ordinary character
- ✦ Honored member of the national council
- ✦ Wealthy
- ✦ Wondered why Christ did not respect his position of a ruler



- ✦ He was stirred by the teachings of Jesus and was attracted to him.
- ✦ The lessons he heard from him greatly impressed him.
- ✦ The priests and rulers decided to put an end to Jesus' work but Nicodemus did not agree. He remembered how the prophets had been slain for rebuking the sins of the leaders. He knew the bondage of the Jews to a heathen nation was because of their stubbornness in rejecting the reproofs of God, and he believed that plotting against Jesus was following in the steps of their forefathers and would bring fresh calamities upon them.

- ✦ “In a council of the Sanhedrin, when the course to be pursued toward Jesus was considered, Nicodemus advised caution and moderation. He urged that if Jesus was really invested with authority from God, it would be perilous to reject His warnings. The priests dared not disregard this counsel, and for the time they took no open measures against the Saviour” (*DA* 167.2).

- ✦ After hearing Jesus, he began to study the prophecies of the Messiah, and as he studied the conviction grew that Jesus was the expected Messiah.
- ✦ With many others in Israel he had been greatly distressed by the profanation of the temple. He was a witness of the scene when Jesus drove out the buyers and the sellers; he beheld the wonderful manifestation of **divine power**; he saw the Saviour receiving the **poor** and healing the **sick**; he saw their **looks of joy**, and heard their **words of praise**; and he could not doubt that **Jesus of Nazareth was the Sent of God**. (*DA 168.1*)

- ✦ He greatly desired an interview with Jesus, but shrank from seeking Him openly. It would be too **humiliating** for a ruler of the Jews to acknowledge himself in sympathy with a teacher as yet so little known. And should his visit come to the knowledge of the Sanhedrin, it would draw upon him their **scorn and denunciation**. He resolved upon a secret interview, excusing this on the ground that if he were to go openly, others might follow his example. Learning by special inquiry the Saviour's place of retirement in the Mount of Olives, he waited until the city was hushed in slumber, and then sought Him. (*DA* 168.2)



Victoria Ishaq, from the book *The Despicable Missionary*. She grew up in Pakistan, is a Christian, but as a child was called “paleed” by the Muslim children in her neighborhoods, which means despicable, unclean, or impure. It is one of the most hurtful insults anyone can say to a child in Pakistan, and she was called this because she was a Christian.



When she started school she hoped to make new friends who did not know she was a Christian.



Self-competent, distinguished, self-reliant, self-controlled, financially stable, determined. Ellen White calls it self-possession. He was a leader and strode with a purpose. He was not like the poor and needy that sought Jesus daily.

So, what was it that
Nicodemus wanted from Jesus?



He was seeking truth
(*DA* 168.4).

In the presence of
Christ, Nicodemus
felt a strange timidity,
which he endeavored
to conceal under an
air of composure and
dignity (*DA* 168.3).

And he resorted to
flattery—John 3:2



- ✦ His purpose was to enter into a discussion with Jesus about his authority and his mission. He wanted to know its theory and to have his curiosity satisfied. He was looking for information and not for conversion. He was already converted, or so he thought.
- ✦ When you meet someone who says, *So, tell me what you believe*, you may be with someone like Nicodemus—curiously interested but not necessarily seeking any change of heart.

By speaking of Christ's rare gifts as a teacher, and also of His wonderful power to perform miracles, he hoped to pave the way for his interview. His words were designed to express and to invite confidence; but they really expressed unbelief. He did not acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, but only a teacher sent from God. (*DA* 168.3)

Instead of recognizing this salutation, Jesus bent His eyes upon the speaker, as if reading his very soul. In His infinite wisdom He saw before Him a seeker after truth. He knew the object of this visit, and with a desire to deepen the conviction already resting upon His listener's mind, He came directly to the point, saying solemnly, yet kindly, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3, margin. (*DA* 168.4)

Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart. You must receive a new life from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, making all things new, it will result in no saving good for you to discuss with Me My authority or My mission. (*DA* 171.1)

Nicodemus had heard the preaching of John the Baptist concerning repentance and baptism, and pointing the people to One who should baptize with the Holy Spirit. He himself had felt that there was a lack of spirituality among the Jews, that, to a great degree, they were controlled by bigotry and worldly ambition. He had hoped for a better state of things at the Messiah's coming. Yet the heart-searching message of the Baptist had failed to work in him conviction of sin. (*DA* 171.2)

He was a strict Pharisee, and prided himself on his good works. He was widely esteemed for his benevolence and his liberality in sustaining the temple service, and he felt secure of the favor of God. He was startled at the thought of a kingdom too pure for him to see in his present state. (*DA* 171.2)

. . . by virtue of his birth as an Israelite he regarded himself as sure of a place in the kingdom of God. He felt that he needed no change. Hence his surprise at the Saviour's words. He was irritated by their close application to himself. The pride of the Pharisee was struggling against the honest desire of the seeker after truth. He wondered that Christ should speak to him as He did, not respecting his position as ruler in Israel.

(DA 171.3)

Surprised out of his self-possession, he answered Christ in words full of irony, “How can a man be born when he is old?” . . .

But the Saviour did not meet argument with argument. Raising His hand with solemn, quiet dignity, He pressed the truth home with greater assurance, “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.” **Nicodemus knew that Christ here referred to water baptism and the renewing of the heart by the Spirit of God.** He was convinced that he was in the presence of the One whom John the Baptist had foretold. (*DA* 171.4, 5)

- ✦ But was Nicodemus baptized?
- ✦ Luke 7:30

Jesus continued: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” . . . The Christian’s life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but **a transformation of nature**. There is a **death to self and sin, and a new life altogether**. [slide 40] This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. . . .

Nicodemus was still perplexed, and Jesus used the wind to illustrate His meaning . . . (*DA* 172.1, 2)

In the interview with Nicodemus, **Jesus unfolded the plan of salvation, and His mission to the world.** In none of His subsequent discourses did He explain so fully, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the hearts of all who would inherit the kingdom of heaven. At the very beginning of His ministry He opened the truth to a member of the Sanhedrin, to the mind that was most receptive, and to an appointed teacher of the people. But the leaders of Israel did not welcome the light. Nicodemus hid the truth in his heart, and for three years there was little apparent fruit. (*DA 176.1*)

Only-begotten

- ✦ Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. (*GC* 493.1)

- ✦ The Greek word for son is υἱός (*huois*), and the Greek word for God is θεός (*theos*). The Textus Receptus reads *only begotten son*, while the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts read *only begotten god*. Trinitarians using the corrupted Catholic manuscripts do not believe that there can be a “begotten God”; therefore, they declare that the word *monogenēs* must, instead, mean unique or only one.
- ✦ *Monogenēs* is used in reference to Jesus five times in the Bible, always by John (John 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18; 1 John 4:9). There are three passages in the book of Luke and a passage in Hebrews. *Monogenēs* means only born. *The Foundation of Our Faith*, chapter 11. (<https://smyrna.org/books/>)

But Jesus was acquainted with the soil into which He cast the seed. The words spoken at night to one listener in the lonely mountain were not lost. For a time Nicodemus did not publicly acknowledge Christ, but he watched His life, and pondered His teachings. In the Sanhedrin council he repeatedly thwarted the schemes of the priests to destroy Him. When at last Jesus was lifted up on the cross, Nicodemus remembered the teaching upon Olivet: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The light from that secret interview illumined the cross upon Calvary, and Nicodemus saw in Jesus the world’s Redeemer. (*DA* 176.2)

After the Lord's ascension, when the disciples were scattered by persecution, Nicodemus came boldly to the front. He employed his wealth in sustaining the infant church that the Jews had expected to be blotted out at the death of Christ. In the time of peril he who had been so cautious and questioning was firm as a rock, encouraging the faith of the disciples, and furnishing means to carry forward the work of the gospel. He was scorned and persecuted by those who had paid him reverence in other days. He became poor in this world's goods; yet he faltered not in the faith which had its beginning in that night conference with Jesus. (*DA* 177.1)

Nicodemus related to John the story of that interview, and by his pen it was recorded for the instruction of millions. The truths there taught are as important today as they were on that solemn night in the shadowy mountain, when the Jewish ruler came to learn the way of life from the lowly Teacher of Galilee. (*DA* 177.2)

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- ✦ His mission on earth was to establish a spiritual instead of a temporal kingdom.
- ✦ It involves a work of grace on the heart.
- ✦ The Jews were zealous to maintain an appearance of holiness, but they neglected holiness of heart. While they were sticklers for the letter of the law, they were constantly violating its spirit. Their great need was a new moral birth, a cleansing from sin, and a renewing of knowledge and holiness.

- ✦ The most rigid obedience to the mere letter of the law as applied to the outward life could entitle no man to enter the kingdom of heaven.
- ✦ He explained the meaning of the new birth and how it was accomplished—
- ✦ “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

- ✦ The people well knew that in itself the serpent had no power to help them. It was a symbol of Christ. As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made “in the likeness of sinful flesh” was to be their Redeemer. Romans 8:3. Many of the Israelites regarded the sacrificial service as having in itself virtue to set them free from sin. God desired to teach them that it had no more value than that serpent of brass. **It was to lead their minds to the Saviour.** Whether for the healing of their wounds or the pardon of their sins, they could do nothing for themselves but show their faith in the Gift of God. They were to look and live. (*DA* 174.4)

- ✦ Like Nicodemus, we must be willing to enter into life in the same way as the chief of sinners. Than Christ, “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12. **Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing.** It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin. And we cannot even repent without the aid of the Spirit of God. The Scripture says of Christ, “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Acts 5:31. Repentance comes from Christ as truly as does pardon. (*DA* 175.4)

✦ How, then, are we to be saved? [1] “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” so the Son of man has been lifted up, and everyone who has been deceived and bitten by the serpent may look and live. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. [2] His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. [3] Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a **new life in the soul**. The thoughts and desires are brought into **obedience** to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created **anew in the image of Him** who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is **written in the mind and heart**, and we can say with Christ, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God.” Psalm 40:8. (*DA* 175.5)

John the Baptist
John 3:22-36