

## §26: THE DISCOURSE WITH NICODEMUS

### John 3:1–21

#### First Exchange: “New Birth” Introduced

3:1–3

**1** Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;  
**2** this man came to Him by night, and he said to Him:  
Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher;  
for no one is able to do these signs that You do unless God is with him.  
**3** Jesus answered and said to him:  
Truly, truly [lit. Amen, Amen] I say to you, unless one is born again/from-above,  
he cannot see the kingdom of God.

#### Second Exchange: “New Birth” Explained

3:4–8

**4** Nicodemus said to Him: How can a man be born, being old?  
He cannot enter a second time into the womb of his mother and be born, can he?  
**5** Jesus answered: Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and of 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.  
**7** Do not marvel that I said to you: You [plural] must be born again/from above.  
**8** The wind blows where it wills and you hear its sound,  
but you do not know from where it comes and where it goes.  
So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

#### Third Exchange, Part I: Nicodemus’ Lack of Understanding

3:9–12

**9** Nicodemus answered and said to Him: How can these things be?  
**10** Jesus answered and said to him: You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things?  
**11** Truly, truly I say to you that we speak that which we know, and we testify to that which we have seen,  
and you *people* do not accept our testimony.  
**12** If I told you *people* the earthly things and you *people* do not believe,  
how shall you *people* believe if I should tell you *people* the heavenly things?

#### Third Exchange, Part II: Son of Man to be Lifted Up

3:13–15

**13** And no one has ascended into heaven except the one having descended from heaven—the Son of Man.  
**14** And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,  
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
**15** in order that everyone who believes, in Him may have eternal life.

#### Third Exchange, Part III: How God Loved the World

3:16–17

**16** For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,  
in order that everyone who believes in Him should not perish, but should have eternal life.  
**17** For God did not send the Son into the world that He should judge the world,  
but that the world should be saved through Him.

**Third Exchange, Part IV: What is Judgment?**

3:18–21

**18** He who believes in Him is not judged; but he who does not believe has already been judged, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

**19** And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.

**20** For everyone who commits base things hates the light and does not come to the light, that his deeds might not be exposed.

**21** But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds might be made known [or, revealed, shown] that they have been done [or, worked, accomplished] in God.

**Notes**

1. **Ruler (3:1).** Probably a member of the Jewish high court known as the Sanhedrin. For ruling or leading classes of Jews, see Acts 4:1,5,6,8,23.
2. **Born again/from above (3:3,7).** The word used here means “from above” in Matt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38; John 3:31; 19:11,23; Jas. 1:17; 3:15,17; it means “from the beginning” in Lk. 1:3; Acts 26:5; and it means “again” in Gal. 4:9. (These are all of the passages in the N.T. where the word occurs.) “From the beginning” does not fit the context, so we are left with either “from above” or “again.” *BAGD*, pg. 77 has: “purposely ambiguous and means both *born from above* and *born again* J3:3,7.”
3. **Wind (3:8).** In Greek (as well as Hebrew) the word for “Spirit” is the same as the one used for “wind.” Context must decide. (In some contexts the word can also mean “breath”.)
4. **You people.** The Greek form for “you” here is plural, so Jesus is directing his comments not just to Nicodemus.
5. The expression “eternal life” is found about 44 times in the N.T.:

|           |          |           |             |            |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Mt. 19:16 | Jn. 3:36 | Jn. 10:28 | Ro. 6:23    | 1 Jn. 5:11 |
| 19:29     | 4:14     | 12:25     | Gal. 6:8    | 5:13       |
| 25:46     | 4:36     | 12:50     | 1 Tim. 1:16 | 5:20       |
| Mk. 10:17 | 5:24     | 17:2      | 6:12        | Jude 21    |
| 10:30     | 5:39     | 17:3      | 6:19        |            |
| Lk. 10:25 | 6:27     | Ac. 13:46 | Tit. 1:2    |            |
| 18:18     | 6:40     | 13:48     | 3:7         |            |
| 18:30     | 6:47     | Ro. 2:7   | 1 Jn. 1:2   |            |
| Jn. 3:15  | 6:54     | 5:21      | 2:25        |            |
| 3:16      | 6:68     | 6:22      | 3:15        |            |