

John 3:1-8 The Spirit of New Birth

The Holy Spirit sovereignly gives new birth to sinners so that we recognize the Divine King and willingly live under His reign.

1. New birth is necessary to live with and for God (3:1-3, 5, 7).
 - a. Nicodemus “compliments” Jesus as his peer (1-2).
 - i. “We know”—1) identifies Nicodemus with a prestigious group; 2) claims religious knowledge and discernment
 - ii. “Rabbi” and “teacher come from God”—places Jesus on same level as his group
 - iii. “these signs”—John uses “signs” to describe Christ’s works because they are meant to give insight into who Jesus really is (2:11, 18-19; 4:54; 6:14, 26; 9:16; 12:18); yet those who rely on signs demonstrate inadequate faith (2:23-25; 4:48); thus, signs can inform faith, but not create faith.
 - b. Obviously, Nicodemus does not perceive the meaning of Christ’s signs.
 - i. Jesus replies to his “no one can do these signs unless God is with him” (v. 2) with “no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again” (v. 3)—play on words “sign” and “see” to “show” Nicodemus that he does not “know/perceive” so well
 - ii. “You” (plural) **must** be born again (v. 7)—shockingly, all people, including people like Nicodemus!
 - iii. “Truly, Truly” (vv. 3, 5) underscores importance and absoluteness of Jesus’ statement
 - c. “Kingdom of God” refers to God’s reign—to see and enter the Kingdom is to enjoy the eternal life of Christ and to submit to the rule of Christ by faith
 - d. We all love the darkness and hate the light until we are given life (vv. 19-20)
2. New birth is produced by the Spirit as He pleases (3:4-8).
 - a. What does Nicodemus understand Jesus to be saying?
 - i. You have to start over, just like the Gentiles.
 - ii. Gentile proselytes to Judaism were called “newborn children.”
 - iii. Jews understood that they were already God’s children by virtue of their descent from Abraham, but that Gentiles could only become God’s children by conversion to Judaism, completed by circumcision.
 - iv. Nicodemus does not understand why a morally mature religious leader would need to return to the status of a new convert. This would be like an old man passing through his mother’s womb a second time.
 - b. What does Jesus really mean?
 - i. You need more than a new start, you need a new nature (v. 6).
 - ii. All religious effort or moral transformation that is born from human will, strength, and wisdom (flesh), will only produce man-pleasing religion (flesh).
 - iii. True religion, to enjoy living with and for God (Spirit), must be born from the renewing power of the Holy Spirit (Spirit).

- c. Once the Spirit gives us a new nature/life, we have a new love for the light, a desire to do what is true. Our deeds of truth (faith in Christ and the loving obedience that flows from faith) are not done in our strength, but are “carried out in God” (v. 21).
 - d. The Spirit gives this life to whomever He pleases. No one deserves it. He freely gives it.
- 3. New birth is evident in faith and practice (3:3, 5, 12-16, 21).
 - a. The born again see the Kingdom—perceive that Jesus is the Christ and believe in Him (vv. 3, 14-16).
 - b. The born again enter the Kingdom—enjoy living with and for God (v. 5).
 - c. Water and Spirit—Ezek. 36:25-27
 - d. Is the Spirit’s work evident in your life? Do you recognize Jesus as your Savior and King? Are you enjoying life under His reign?