

Quotes about the Gospel of John:

1. "And what was Christ's response to Nicodemus' address? This "ruler of the Jews" hailed Him as "a teacher come from God" and such is the only conception of the Christ of God." – A.W. Pink
2. "That baptism is in no wise essential to salvation, that it does not form one of the conditions which God requires the sinner to meet, is clear from many considerations." – A.W. Pink

Nicodemus and the New Birth

Read John 3:1 – Who were the Pharisees?

- The Pharisees were a social movement and a school of Rabbinic thought during the time of the second Temple period. After the destruction of Israel and the Temple in AD 70 Pharisaical teaching became the dominate ritualistic basis for Rabbinic Judaism.
- Pharisees believed in resurrection, but the Sadducees did not. The Pharisees organized around the written law of Moses, the Torah (First 5 books of the Old Testament) and the oral traditions, and the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees only recognized the written law.
- Pharisees were very popular among the people during Jesus' day. We only hear about them in the Gospels and in Acts, but they grew after the fall of the Temple and Israel in AD 70. The Mishna was compiled AD 200 and

incorporated the teachings of the Pharisees and is used today in Orthodox Judaism.

Read John 3:1 – Who was Nicodemus?

- Nicodemus was a Greek name meaning “people crusher” or “conqueror of people”. Nicodemus is mentioned 3 times in the Fourth Gospel (3:1, 7:50, 19:39) and is not mentioned in any of the other Gospels.
- He was a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin were assemblies of seventy-one elders (known as "rabbis" after 70 AD), who were appointed to sit as a tribunal in every city in the ancient Land of Israel ([Wikipedia](#)). That is what the writer of John means when he says, “ruler of the Jews”. The court of law for the Jewish people. There was 71 members and a High Priest. The authority of this Sanhedrin had been limited with the Roman occupation but had great symbolism among the Jewish people in and around Judah.
- Nicodemus was a powerful man at the time of Jesus, and he had reached the pinnacle of Judaism. This would be like meeting the President of the United States and Jesus was unphased by him.

Read John 3:2 - Notice how many times the writer of John uses the word “man”.

- Closing out chapter 2 the Fourth Gospel said, Jesus “needed no one to bear witness about man, for He Himself knew what was in man”. Then chapter 3 starts “there was a man...” Vs. 2 “This man...”
- 4 times the writer of John calls out “man”. Jesus knew the heart of man with the term “man” applying to both men and women as that is how the Greek language states it when the term “man” is applied in this manner.
- Jesus knew Nicodemus’ heart and he was not impressed. Jesus knew what this man was about and in eternal terms, in Spiritual terms, in Kingdom of God terms this man was nothing, but outwardly, fleshly, and earthly he was someone all Jewish people looked up to.
- Nicodemus came to Jesus “by night”. I think there are 3 meanings here.
 1. He came to Jesus by night so that he would not be seen talking to Jesus.
 2. This was the only time he could get an audience with Him b/c of so many people around.
 3. The Fourth Gospel uses night to symbolize the realm of evil, untruth and ignorance (3:2, 9:4, 11:10, 13:30). Jesus is the light of the world come to save the elect from the darkness, and the writer of John is making a correlation.

- Nicodemus calls Jesus Rabbi. For a ruler of the Sanhedrin to call Jesus, Rabbi shows us that he truly respected Jesus and knew He was something special. Though Nicodemus did not believe Jesus was the messiah, at least not yet he knows he is from God.

Read John 3: 3 – What does Jesus mean by “born again”?

- Truly, truly Jesus says. It means Amen, amen. This is only found in the 4th Gospel. Jesus uses this expression b/c He wants the person or persons to know that what He [Jesus] is about to say is a universal truth. It is a revelation from God. “Take it to the bank” in other words. It means listen closely to what I am about to tell you.
- “Born Again” – Spiritually, we must be [regenerated](#). Our spirit was dead, never to want for Godly things, never to seek Him and the truth. Through God’s grace we are made new with the Holy Spirit. Once our Spirit is regenerated, we slowly begin the journey of become a better Christian. Wanting to know the truth we set out to learn. This takes time and for some it takes their entire life to move just a little. Without a Spiritual rebirth from the Holy Spirit, you are not a Christian, but after this Spiritual rebirth you are new.
 - The word “again” is Greek for “anōthen” which has a double meaning either “again” or “from above”. “From above” is more than likely the

usage here. Born from above we are regenerated into a new Spiritual being brought forth from above. We had nothing to do with this regeneration. God and His infinite wisdom and infinite grace gave us this new Spirit destined for the heavenly Kingdom of God.

- Interesting observation in the text: Vs. 3 starts with “Jesus answered him”, but Nicodemus did not ask a question. Nicodemus made a statement. Why would the text say Jesus answered? It is possible Jesus answered the question that was on Nicodemus’ mind? Go back to John 2:25 “He knew what was in man”. Jesus knew men’s hearts. He knew the real question Nicodemus was wanting to ask. How do I enter the Kingdom of Heaven? How do I receive everlasting life?

Read Chapter 3:4-8 – What does Jesus’ mean born of water and spirit?

- Pharisees believed that if you were born of Jewish descent you were going to heaven. They believed God would not let one single true Israelite born of one of the 12 tribes not see the Kingdom of God. This is why Jesus says these things to Nicodemus and Nicodemus is confused. This is all he has ever known and been taught. Jesus has just blown his mind.
- Vs. 5 - “born of water and the Spirit” – the word “the” was inserted by translators the original Greek read “born of water and spirit”.

- Water appears in the Bible 396 times and in most cases, it references cleansing. Ezekiel 36:25 – God will use water to clean his people of idolatry. Ezekiel goes on to talk about the spirit in conjunction with water. Ezekiel 36:26 – “I will give you a new heart and a new spirit...” In Joel, the spirit will be poured out like water. Joel 2:28-29 – “Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days”. Isaiah 32:15 – until the Spirit is poured upon is from on high”. Read together the connection between the water and spirit can be seen best Ezekiel 36:24 – 27.
- Jesus is NOT talking about baptism. Here are a few reasons why:
 - Audience relevance – Who is Jesus talking to at this moment? Christian baptism would have no significance for Nicodemus. He would not know what that was. He may have heard about John “Baptizing” in the Jordan, but that is a big stretch between that and what Jesus is telling him.
 - Nowhere in the Old Testament does it talk about water baptism saving God’s people. Jesus is talking to a man that had at least memorized the first 5 books of the OT called the Torah.
 - The New Testament talks about the saving grace of Christ for salvation, not the ability to be baptized. We are saved by His

grace and mercy not by whether we choose to be baptized or not.

- Water is a symbol ([emblematic](#)) God uses to refer to the Word of God. Before Jesus, the Christ came to earth as a man, he was the Word of God as we laid out in the first [Study Guide](#).
- As we will see in the next chapter John 4:14 Jesus talks to the woman at the well about giving her water so that she will never thirst again. Living water.
- V6-7 – That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of spirit is spirit. It is two different existences one from man (flesh) born from Adam who was the fallen representative and corrupted all after him. Jesus is the new Adam (Romans 5:12-21).
 - No longer is being born in the line of Abraham give Nicodemus or any of the Jews in Israel guarantee they will reach heaven. Being born by the Holy Spirit from the heavenly Father is the only way to reach the Kingdom of God.
 - Nicodemus was amazed at “must be born from above” and Jesus says do not be amazed. It is in the Old Testament and in the [intertestamental writings](#). Being a leader in the Sanhedrin he should have understood what Jesus was talking about.

- Ezekiel 36: 25-28 – Cleansed of all unrighteousness.
- [Jubilees 1:25](#) - I will create a holy spirit in them and cleanse them...
- "The first "you" in this text is singular, referring to Nicodemus, but the second "you" is plural, referring to a general principle applicable to all human beings. The plural "you" sets Jesus over against not just Nicodemus, but the entire human race." - [Daivd B Curtis](#)