

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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What Does it Mean to be "Born Again"? John 3:3-7

--By Terry Carter

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**'" John 3:3 (NKJV)

In this verse, Jesus tells Nicodemus, who had come to Him by night, that he must be born again to see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant by this and so he asked whether a man can enter his mother's womb the second time. Jesus responded by pointing out that the new birth is of water and Spirit, as opposed to flesh. He makes this clear by stating that what is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. In other words, if a man did enter his mother's womb a second time, he would only be born of flesh the second time, not of the Spirit. This is not what it means to be "born again". Being born again involves water and the Spirit.

"5 Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the 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." John 3:5-6 (NKJV)

This should not have surprised Nicodemus. In fact, Jesus rebuked him for being a teacher in Israel and

not knowing these things. "7 **"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'**"...10 Jesus answered and said to him, "**Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"** John 3:7,10 (NKJV)

Nearly two thousand years have passed, and we have come to a time when many who consider themselves leaders in the Christian world, know as little about being born again as Nicodemus did. It has once again become necessary to explain what it means to be born again.

There are two things that are clear from this passage in John. The first is that this is not a fleshly birth. It has nothing to do with being born of a woman or emerging from the womb. The second is that it involves water and the Spirit.

As has been said so many times, Scripture is the best commentary on itself. There are other passages of Scripture that connect water and the Spirit, a new birth and water, or all three.

On the day of Pentecost, the Jews were convicted by Peter that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. They cried out "What shall we do?" Peter answered that they needed to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Then Peter said to them, "**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**" Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

This is a clear connection between the waters of baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Paul makes it clear in Romans that baptism marks the end of our old life and the beginning of a new life in Christ. This is what it means to be "reborn". It means that we have ended our old life and begun a new one. Baptism into the death of Christ marks the time when we die to sin and begin our walk in a newness of life. That is, our old life has ended and a new life has begun. We have been reborn.

Romans 6:2-4 (NKJV) "2 Certainly not! How shall **we who died to sin** live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that **as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?** 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**"

Perhaps the clearest passage is found in Paul's letter to Titus. There, Paul talks about the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit". "...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy **He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,**" Titus 3:5 (NKJV)

There are some things that make this particularly important.

First, the word "regeneration" means "to be born again" or "rebirth". Some

translations even translate the word as “new birth”. This clearly connects what Paul is talking about here with being born again.

Second, it is not just regeneration or rebirth, but the washing of regeneration. There is water involved just like in **John 3:5**. Some translations render it “bath” instead of washing. This clearly refers to baptism. Even commentators that deny any connection between baptism and salvation admit this to be a reference to baptism.

Third, we have the renewing of the Holy Spirit. It is not the Holy Spirit who is being renewed here. Rather, the Holy Spirit is renewing us by the washing of regeneration. The picture is clear. In baptism, the Holy Spirit renews us, and this is a rebirth or regeneration. The connection to **John 3:5** is also crystal clear. In baptism we are born of the water and the Spirit. This is what it means to be reborn.

Today there are many who deny this to be true. They argue that water in **John 3:5** has nothing to do with baptism. We will look at what they claim it does refer to in a moment. But first it needs to be pointed out that their position is a new one, not an old one. The people who were taught by the apostles and those who learned from ones who were taught by the apostles believed that the water in **John 3:5** did refer to baptism. In fact, this was the universal understanding of the church for centuries.

Consider the testimony of the early Christian writers. Dr. W. Wall, is the author of ‘*The History of Infant Baptism*’. He studied all the writers from the death of John to the fifth century. He said the following in regards to water in **John 3:5**: “*There is not any one Christian writer, of any antiquity, in any language, but who understands it of baptism; and if it be not so understood, it is difficult to give an account how a person is born of water any more than born of wood.*” (4th London edition, page 116, vol. 1, 1819)

*Christians of those times [about 150 A.D.] (many of whom lived in the days of the Apostles) used the word “regeneration” (or “being born again”) for baptism; and that they were taught to do so by the Apostles. And because we see by it that they understood **John 3:5** of water baptism; and so did all the writers of those 400 years, not one man excepted.*” (page 54)

Dr. Wall also said the following in regards to the terms “regenerate” and “born again”: “*The Christians did, in all ancient times, continue the use of this name, “regeneration,” for baptism; so that they never use the word “regenerate,” or “born again,” but they mean, or denote by it, baptism.*” (Vol. 1, page 24)

Bishop White said, “*Regeneration as detached from baptism never entered into any creed before the 17th century*”.

Listen to B.F. Westcott’s comments on **John 3:5**: “*All interpretations which treat the term water here simply figurative and descriptive of the cleansing power of the Spirit are essentially defective, as they are also opposed to all ancient tradition.*”

“It can, then, scarcely be questioned that as Nicodemus heard the words, water carried with it a reference to John’s baptism, which was a divinely appointed rite (1:33), gathering up into itself and investing with a new importance all the lustral baptisms of the Jews...”

*“...they look forward to the fullness of the Christian dispensation, when after the Resurrection the baptism of water was no longer separated from, but united with, the baptism of the Spirit in the ‘laver of regeneration’” **Titus 3:5, Eph. 5:26**...” (The Gospel According to John, pages 49-50)*

Even Adam Clark makes the following comments on **John 3:3-5**: “*...the Jews supposed every baptized proselyte enjoyed; [a new birth] for they held that the Gentile, who became a proselyte, was like a child new born ... they acknowledged that a man must be born again ... they made*

that new birth to consist in profession, confession, and external washing.”

“To the baptism of water a man was admitted when he became a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and in this baptism, he promised in the most solemn manner to renounce idolatry, to take the God of Israel for his God, and to have his life conformed to the precepts of the Divine law.”

“...baptism by water into the Christian faith, was necessary to every Jew and Gentile that entered into the kingdom of the Messiah...”

Note carefully that even though he sees the water as figurative of the Spirit’s working, he must admit that the passage is talking about literal water being used in a literal washing which happens in baptism. So, while he saw baptism as merely symbolic, he admits that the water in **John 3:5** refers to baptism. He makes a similar admission about the washing of regeneration in **Titus 3:5**. To him there was no question whether these referred to baptism. He simply argues that that didn’t mean that baptism was essential to salvation.

Matthew Henry admits that the “washing of regeneration” in **Titus 3:5** is baptism.

Both George Whitfield and John Wesley believed that water baptism was the means of the new birth. Whitfield said that **John 3:5** urged, “*the absolute necessity of water baptism*”. Wesley said it is, “*by water as the means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again*”.

The president of Yale, Timothy Dwight said, “*to be born of water is to be baptized*”.

It is certainly true that the above quotes are from mere men. However, they are studied men who simply documented that the “water” in **John 3:5** was universally understood to be referring to baptism for the first 400 years of Christianity and nothing opposed to that entered any creeds for the first 17 centuries of Christianity. When men claim that it

refers to something else today, they are teaching something new, not something old. They are teaching something different than what those who were taught by the apostles believed.

Objection 1: “Water” means “Spirit”, not “water”

Some today argue that “water” in **John 3:5** has nothing to do with baptism. They claim that “water” here actually means “Spirit”. If you object that this makes the verse nonsensical as it would say that you must be born of “Spirit and the Spirit”, they respond that it should read, “water, even the Spirit”. That is, the word “and” should be translated “even”. Thus, they would have us believe that “water” does not mean “water” and “and” does not mean “and”. Oh how convenient it is to rewrite the verse mire to your liking.

While admitting that some want to make “and” mean “even” in **John 3:5**, Vine’s Expository Dictionary points out why this is not likely. “*The epexegetic or explanatory use of ‘kai’ [Greek for ‘and’] followed by a noun in apposition and meaning ‘namely’ or ‘even’ is comparatively rare. Vine’s cautionary word needs heeding, that ‘this meaning has been introduced into too many passages’.*”

So, it is rather unlikely that it is proper to translate the word “and” as “even” in this passage. Such a conclusion is not justified by the Greek.

When asked why they would think that “water” actually refers to the Spirit, they may point you to **John 7:38-39** where Jesus speaks of water in reference to the Holy Spirit. “38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, **out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**” 39 **But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive;** for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” **John 7:38-39 (NKJV)** In this passage, however, it is clear right in the context that “water” refers to the Holy Spirit. This is true for two reasons. First, John plainly says so in

verse 39. Second, Jesus does not simply use the word “water” in verse 38. Instead, He uses the adjective “living” to describe this water. He is not speaking of mere “water”, but “living water”.

The same thing is true in **John Chapter 4** when Jesus is speaking to the woman at the well. The context makes it clear that Jesus is not talking about actual literal water. First, He calls it “living water” just like in **John Chapter 7**. But further, He makes it clear that this is water only He can give in contrast to that which she can draw from the well. This is water that can cause you to never thirst again. Clearly this is not literal water.

But there is nothing in the context of **John Chapter 3** to indicate that “water” is anything other than actual literal water. There is no explanation by John that it is anything other than literal water. Jesus does not call it “living water” but simply “water”. He doesn’t speak of this water as having any special properties that normal water does not possess. He simply calls it “water”.

It is worth noting that the Gospel of John uses the word “water” 24 times in 20 verses. Outside of **John 3:5**, which is the verse in question, it always means literal water except when it is referred to as “living water”.

This only happens in **Chapters 4** and **7**. In both those passages it is clear from both the context and the designation as “living water” that literal water is not intended. To try and make “water” in **John 3:5** anything other than literal water simply ignores the context and imposes a theological bias on the passage.

Objection 2: Water here means the amniotic fluid of childbirth.

It is interesting that while some try to argue that “water” doesn’t mean water at all, others want to make it the water of childbirth as opposed to baptism. You cannot argue that baptism is not in the context and also argue that amniotic fluid is in the context. But

there are other problems with this position as well.

First, it would simply make no sense for Jesus to tell Nicodemus that he had to be born of amniotic fluid and the Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God. He had already been born of his mother and was asking whether he needed to do that a second time.

Second, Jesus says, “That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.”, **John 3:6**. In other words, Jesus is not talking about a physical birth at all. He is talking about a Spiritual birth that is of water and the Spirit.

Third, if you must be born of amniotic fluid to enter the Kingdom, then babies that are miscarried have no hope. In other words, if physical birth is necessary for salvation, those who died before physical birth are lost. I don’t think anyone wants to take that position. (Although there have been those in the past that have had some wild theories about this sort of thing.) This would make physical birth more important than baptism.

What Jesus told Nicodemus is pretty plain to an unbiased mind. To be reborn is to be born of the water and the Spirit. There is no good reason to believe that “water” here means anything other than literal water. It is obviously not amniotic fluid, but the water of baptism that He is referring to here.

As Paul says in Titus, it is the “washing (or bath) of regeneration (or rebirth) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit that saves us, **Titus 3:5**. This is in perfect agreement with what Peter said on Pentecost and what he said in **I Peter 3:21**, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:” **KJV**

You need professional help to misunderstand that. Unfortunately, there are plenty of “professionals” around who are more than happy to help you misunderstand.

Dear Brother Faull,

Jesus seemed surprised about Nicodemus not understanding “Ye must be born again” or “except a man is born of the water and Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God”.

Why should have Nicodemus understood these statements? Is it true that the King James Version’s use of the word “thee” is singular and the use of “ye” denotes plural? Marvel not that I say unto thee (Nicodemus), ye (all) must be born again?

ANSWER:

To your latter questions you are correct for Jesus said, “Except a man be born again or from above he cannot enter the Kingdom of God”. This would include any man, Jew or Gentile.

The word “again” is translated “from above” the majority of times John uses the word.

E.g. **John 3:31**, “He that cometh from **above** is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.”

John 19:11, “Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from **above**: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”

This shows that God is involved in the new birth.

As to the former question, there are several reasons Nicodemus should have known what Jesus was speaking about. Let’s look at some reasons:

1. The Greek says that Nicodemus was “the teacher of Israel”. The Greek calls him the teacher of Israel as Jesus used the definite article so He should have known the prophecies in Ezekiel. For example, **Ezekiel 36:24-31**.

What did Ezekiel promise God would do?

Ezekiel 36:24-28, “24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. 25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and **ye shall be clean**: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26 A **new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you**: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*. 28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

Three times Ezekiel gave God’s promises of a new heart and spirit. We need a new heart and a new spirit from God to be a new man. Reforming will not remove our iniquities.

Repentance and cleansing are necessary to be born from above. This is highlighted in **Hebrews 10:22**, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

My father used to use an illustration of an old Indian chief who told a Christian had to forgive and love his enemies, do good to those who used him, stop killing and stealing from other tribes, and stop stealing other men’s wives. He would need to learn the golden rule and the Royal law. Do to others what you would have them do for you and do for your neighbors as you would for yourself.

The old Indian said, “Great Creator spirit would have to give Indian a new heart and Spirit”.

Exactly, one must be born from above. Nicodemus should have known Ezekiel’s prophecies.

2. All four Gospels testify as to whom John was. The people thought he was the Christ as in **Luke 3:15-16**, “15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; 16 John answered, saying unto *them* all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:”

When John was in the wilderness of Judea, he affirmed we must repent because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. **Matthew 3:2**.

The people of Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan went out to hear him and were baptized of him in the Jordan. However, he refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matthew 3:7-8, “7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:”

He told the people he was not worthy to wear Jesus’ shoes. He baptized with water, but the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit. **Matthew 5:11, Mark 1:2-8**

John 1:20 answers some of the Pharisees, Priests, and Levites when they asked him pointed questions if he was not Elijah, the prophet like unto Moses (**Deuteronomy 18:15**) or the Christ.

He made it plain he was the voice Isaiah foretold who would

be forerunner of the Christ. But the Baptizer did no miracles. (**John 10:41**)

But Nicodemus was convinced he was of God for John said Nicodemus said, "The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." **John 3:2**

So, he knew from his friends who John was not and was sure Jesus, the miracle worker, was from God. The Pharisees were rejected by John whom he had called them snakes and vipers. We do not know if Nicodemus was with those whom the Baptizer rebuked. Maybe he did not want the public rebuke from Jesus that John had given them, so he went at night.

Listen to **Luke 7:29-30**, "29 And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, **justified God**, being baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and lawyers **rejected the counsel of God against themselves**, being not baptized of him."

We do not know if Nicodemus was one of them who refused the baptism of John or not, but he had no plans of being a public disciple of Jesus. His Pharisee brethren did not believe Jesus. They said, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" **John 7:48**

These verses seemed to show that Nicodemus had not been baptized of John nor believed on Jesus yet. Either peer-pressure from his fellow Pharisees, or fear of a public rebuke by Jesus as John had done to the Pharisees, or he was just not sure yet as to Whom Jesus was. It made him cautious.

He knew Jesus was a man sent from God and he should have

known Jesus was not just saying you have to be born of your mother and born again from above. This would be ludicrous for Jesus to have said such a thing.

3. Another passage that should have made Nicodemus realize what Jesus was talking about instead of imagining entering his mother's womb a second time, is found in **Psalms 87**. Let us quote it.

Psalms 87:4-6, "4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this *man* was born there. 5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. 6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that* this *man* was born there. Selah."

How could the teacher of Israel not realize that this Psalm is telling us that men from other nations such as Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia would be spiritually born in Jerusalem? These men were said to be born in Zion or Jerusalem. When the Lord counts when he writes His people, it will be said they were born there.

Acts 2:41, 47, "41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day **there were added unto them about three thousand souls**. 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And **the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**"

Romans 9:24-25, "24 Even us, whom he hath called, **not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?** 25 As he saith also in Osee, **I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.**"

Jesus was firm with the teacher and had assured him three times that except a man was born again, or from above he cannot **see** the kingdom of God.

Again, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot **enter** into the kingdom of God, Again Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye all must be born again or from above. **He taught him not to mix Spiritual birth from above and second birth of a mother.**

He also said, "If I told you **earthly things** and ye believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of **Heavenly or Spiritual things?**"

There are still a lot of Nicodemus' around who want to make the birth from above to be both the water in a mother's womb (fleshly birth) and the Spirit a Heavenly birth.

He did error in not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

4. Another reason he should have known what Jesus spoke of was there is evidence that the Jews required immersion of the Gentiles who were wishing to join the Jewish covenant. This was in addition to circumcision.

They call such immersed gentiles, according to Alfred Edersheim, "born again". So later the Talmud and other Rabbis tell us this. Nicodemus should have known the Lord was speaking of water baptism.

That term "born again" was not new to John. The gentiles were as if they had been born a Jew with all the rights of being Jews. It could not have been John's baptism because the Holy Spirit was not associated with John's baptism and John only baptized Jews and not gentiles. He said he baptized with water, but Messiah would baptize with the Spirit. The Spirit was not

given until after Jesus ascended and was given the Kingdom.

John 7:39, "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

Daniel 7:13-14, "13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."

Nicodemus could not enter into the Kingdom because Jesus had not been raised to sit on David's throne as Peter announced on Pentecost.

Acts 2:31-33, "31 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, **he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.**"

When Peter announced on Pentecost that they had killed the Christ, David's son, who was now on His throne and given the Kingdom, the people wanted to know what to do. **They then were the first who were told to repent and be baptized, and they would receive remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.** What Jesus told Nicodemus that men must do is what Peter announced on Pentecost now that Jesus was King on His throne. John's

baptism gave the remission of sins (**Mark 1:4**) but not the Holy Spirit. **John 7:39**, "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

This is why the followers of John the Baptist were baptized into Christ so that they may receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:2-5, "2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, **Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.** 5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

God expects to declare you His Son and give you His Spirit at your Christian baptism.

5. Yet another reason Nicodemus should have found a more reasonable explanation of the "Ye must be born again or from above" is the fact how a man became a priest if he was of the Aaronic order.

He was to proceed to the laver and put off his clothes and then completely bathe himself in the laver. Here he was anointed with oil which they knew sanctified him to do the work of the priest.

He was anointed with oil, which represented the anointing of the Spirit of God. He then put on his priestly garments. He then, and only then, could enter into the Holy Place to do the duties of his priesthood. If not born of water and Spirit, you cannot enter the

Kingdom. Nicodemus should have made the connection of the baptism in the water of the laver and sanctification to serve with full rights to enter into the Holy Place. Only priests could enter the Holy Place.

The Christian today is taught that he puts off the old man and is cleansed at his baptism and sanctified by the Spirit to be a member of the royal priesthood. **1 Peter 2:9**, "But ye *are* a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"

We serve as one cleansed and anointed and clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Jesus did not explain all this to Nicodemus but being the teacher of Israel, Nicodemus should have seen the obvious parallel of the laver and anointing oil.

There was a need for cleansing (water) and sanctification of the Spirit (oil). Admittedly this is clearer by some New Testament Scriptures because of the parallel of **John 3:5** and **Titus 3:5**, where it tells we are saved by the laver of regeneration (what means to be born again) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Many things Jesus taught are enlarged upon in the New Testament, once the Kingdom had been given to Jesus at His ascension. The King had gone to a far country to receive His Kingdom and having received it, His apostles finished out the story in their writings.

6. There is one more thought that the teacher of Israel could have thought upon when we know, "Ye must be born again or from above." I do not know if the apostle Paul was the originator of his illustration that the Jews

were immersed or baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. I do not know if the Jews thought this deeply on this subject before Paul explained the cloud was over them and the water stood up putting them in a womb of water. **1 Corinthians 10:1-2**

The Spirit was above them and the water around them and they were born again, no longer slaves but free men.

If this was commonly understood by the Jews and used by Paul to teach the Jew's birth coming out of the water and the cloud and the illustration was used of the birth of the Jewish nation, then Nicodemus should have seen the analogy between the Red Sea crossing and Christian baptism. They were typically born of the water and Spirit.

There was a difference in John's baptism and proselyte baptism.

1. Proselytes baptized themselves to become a Jew.
2. John baptized them in water as an act of repentance to prepare for Christ.
3. Proselyte baptism was only for Gentiles, but John's was only for the Jews who repented of their sins.
4. Proselyte men and women were baptized in the nude (women only in the presence of women). John baptized them in their clothes.

In baptizing only Jews John was emphasizing that Jewish converts were in need of cleansing and forgiveness too, like Gentiles.

These both differed from Christian baptism.

1. Christian baptism was for both Jew and Gentile. **Acts 2:38-39, Matthew 28:28, Mark 16:16**
2. Christian baptism resulted in not only forgiveness of sins but in

receiving of the Holy Spirit. **Acts 2:38**

3. The proselytes were baptized but Christians did not baptize themselves.
4. Both Jews and Gentiles and women believers were immersed in the New Testament even if they had proselyte baptism or John's baptism earlier.
5. Before Christian baptism, faith in Christ was a prerequisite. Thus,
6. Like John, Christian baptism did not include infant baptism. **Acts 8:36-38**
7. Christian baptism was in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and an imitation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. **Matthew 28:28, Romans 6:3-5, 1 Peter 3:21.**

SUMMARY OF THIS ARTICLE:

Reasons why Nicodemus should have not misunderstood Jesus' statement about being born again:

1. He was the teacher of Israel and should have understood Spiritual birth from the prophecies of the Old Testament where God promised a new heart and Spirit. **Ezekiel 36**
2. He taught that Jesus was a man sent from God and it would be ludicrous for him to think the Messiah was speaking of necessity of physical birth to enter the Kingdom.
3. He should have understood **Psalms 87** foretelling of foreign-born Gentiles would be said to be Spiritually born in Jerusalem.
4. The Gentiles were baptized when they wanted to accept Judaism. They were called "born again". It was not a new statement to him and should have known that Jesus was referring to baptism in water.

When Jesus insisted that the Jews be baptized to enter Heaven, Jesus was indicating they needed cleansing to enter the Heavenly Kingdom as much as Gentiles did to enter the Jewish covenant.

5. He should have caught the parallel when a man became a priest he had to wash in the waters of the laver and be set apart (sanctified) by oil before he could enter the Holy Place.
6. If Paul's illustration of the Jews being born of Red Sea baptism was used before Paul used it, Nicodemus should have known where being born again takes place.
7. The difference between Proselyte baptism, John's baptism, and Christian baptism is worthy of learning.
8. If one desires more information on proselyte baptism, we suggest these:

Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah by Alfred Edersheim Vol 1 Book 2 Chapter 11 page 273 and Appendix 12. (May be read off of the internet.)

What the Bible says of Salvation by Virgil Warren – College Press pgs. 262, 292-294, 296, 304-305, 316.

The Talmud mentions it, but some scholars do not believe it was practiced in the day of Jesus. This is arguing from silence of Josephus. Hillel and Shammai had schools of thought in Jesus' day. Shammai believed proselytes who were baptized could eat of the Passover, but Hillel forbade it.

Surely baptism of proselytes occurred if they were disagreeing on this question. Modern "Jews for Jesus" literature advocate it was an occurrence in Jesus' day.

John 3:8

--By Terry Carter

The above passage is often misunderstood and misapplied. At first glance, it can be difficult to understand.

I've read the thoughts of quite a few people on this verse, but I've never read a better explanation than the one by B.W. Johnson in his *People's New Testament*. It is as follows:

'Most commentators have held that this means: "As the wind moves mysteriously, so does the Spirit, and it breathes upon whom it will, effecting the inward change called the birth of the Spirit arbitrarily." This view I believe [is] due to a wrong translation, sanctioned, not by Greek, but by current theology. Let it be noted that:

(1) Exactly the same Greek term [pneuma] is rendered "wind" and "Spirit" in this verse. It is a violation of all law that the same word should experience so radical a change of meaning in the same sentence.

(2) That the word (pneuma) is not translated "wind" elsewhere, although it occurs scores of times in the New Testament but is always rendered "Spirit."

(3) Another word in the Greek, "anemos", is usually used to represent "wind."

(4) The erroneous idea creates a confusion of figures. It makes Christ to say: "The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is (not the Spirit, but) every one born of the Spirit."

It affirms of him who is born just what is affirmed of the wind, a thing the Savior never did.

These facts are sufficient to show that the rendering "wind" is wrong. All we have to do is translate pneuma here, as is done in the latter part of the verse and elsewhere in the New Testament.

The verse then reads: "The Spirit (pneuma) breathes where it pleases

and thou hearest the voice thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes nor whither it goes. So (by hearing its voice) is every one born of the Spirit" (pneuma).

The meaning is: The Spirit breathes where it wills, and you recognize its manifestation by its voice; by the words spoken by men of God as the Holy Spirit gives them utterance.

You cannot tell whence the Spirit comes to whither it goes, but you can hear its voice when it does come. So, by hearing the voice of the Spirit, is everyone born of the Spirit.

He who receives by faith the communications of the Spirit is born of the Spirit. The birth of the Spirit is not the same thing as the gift of the Spirit. To those who are born of the Spirit is given. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Ga 4:6).

Hence, in harmony with the above view, Peter says, "Being born again, not by corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" [1 Pe 1:23]."

To this I will simply add that some translations do translate "pneuma" as "Spirit" in the first part of this verse.

The Modern King James Version and Young's Literal Translation are among them. Some others have a footnote saying that the word can also be translated "Spirit".

Too often, "new" translations merely follow the precedent set by previous translations. This is especially true if it falls in line with the theological bias of the translator(s).

Jesus has already stressed the importance of the water and the Spirit in being born again. In this verse He is telling us how the Spirit brings about our new birth.

We hear His voice through the Word of God and by this means we can be born again.

Summit School of Preaching Spring Semester 2020

Semester Classes From
January 14th, 2020 - May 7th, 2020

Spring Break Week of
March 30th – April 3rd, 2020

TUESDAYS

6:30-8:30 pm – Q & A About End Times – 2 cr. – T. Carter/G. Faulk

WEDNESDAYS

9-Noon – Elem. Sys. Theol. II
3 cr. - Shane Capps

1:30-4:30 pm – Ministerial Ethics
3 cr. - Jerry Paul

THURSDAYS

9-Noon – Unfolded Plan of God II
3 cr. – Terry Carter

1:30-4:30 pm – Homiletics I
3 cr. - Jeff Faulk

6:30-8:30 pm – Exodus
3 cr. Kendall Faulk

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