

I. Goal

The goal of this class is that we believe more intimately that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and believing this, that we have life in His name.

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

John 20:30-31 (NASB¹)

II. Overview

At the start of this course, we asked, “How well do we know the Son of God?” Thus far, we’ve done an overview of the high-level points of chapters 1-21 of John, looked at Jesus’ seven “I Am” statements and the seven sign miracles, and looked in depth at the prologue of John in 1:1-18. In this week, we’ll look a little deeper at what our Lord and Savior Jesus says about being born again, with a focus on John 3.

Quick review:

III. Setting and Occasion of John 3

John 2:13-3:21	Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem for Passover (the first year of Jesus’ public ministry)
John 5:1-5:47	Jesus goes to Jerusalem for “a feast of the Jews” (possibly Passover)
John 7:14-10:21	Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles
John 10:22-39	Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication (winter)
John 12:12-20:29	Jesus goes to Jerusalem for Passover (when Jesus is crucified, last year of Jesus’ public ministry)

IV. John 2:13-17

On the occasion of Passover, Jesus purified the temple (His Father’s house), using a whip of cords and turning over the money changers’ tables. The Jews asked for a sign as to why He was doing these things. The Synoptic Gospels record that Jesus called them an evil and adulterous generation, craving a sign (Matt. 12:38-40; Luke 11:29-32). Jesus gave them the sign of Jonah in His death and resurrection after three days. In John 2:18, Jesus prophesied what is sometimes called the Sign of Signs when He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” He was speaking of His crucifixion and resurrection to new life.

V. Selah² (Pause and consider)

VI. John 2:23-3:2

Nicodemus was drawn by the signs Jesus did. Being a Pharisee, he probably believed his keeping of the Law would save him. He recognized that Jesus had come from God as a teacher, for the signs couldn’t be done unless God was with Him. Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be “born again,” which is a unique phrase.

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3 (NASB)

- The Greek word for “born” derives from γεννάω (gennaō),³ which is a common word meaning to beget or give birth. The word for “again” derives from ἀνωθεν (anōthen)⁴, and is a less common word (used only 13 times in the New Testament). Anōthen may be translated “from above or by implication, anew or again.” Both words are in the aorist⁵ passive⁶ subjunctive⁷ forms, which means at a point in time, the person may or may not receive the new birth. They don’t do it themselves; it is done for or to them by someone else (by God).
- Nicodemus didn’t understand what it is to be born again or why it is necessary. As a Pharisee, he may not have considered that our heart is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9), that we are conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5), that we are sinners (Rom. 3:23) and that we are flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). In response to his question of how one may be born again, Jesus answered, by water and the Spirit and then differentiated between the two.

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” John 3:5-6 (NASB)

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 1 Corinthians 15:50 (NKJV)

- As to what happens when one is born again (or born from above), Jesus explained it is supernatural, is unseen like the wind and yet its effects can be seen.

“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:8 (NASB)
- As Nicodemus struggled to understand, he asked, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered, “This is because the Son of Man has descended from heaven and because people believe about Him.” God gave His only begotten Son, who would be the source and object of faith and healing, just as the bronze serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness to heal Israel (Num. 21:5-9). Jesus would be lifted up on the cross and all who believe in Him will have eternal life.

“No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. ¹⁴As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:13-16 (NASB)

- E. Note that the one who believes in the Son of Man will have eternal life in Him (John 3:15). The believer shall not perish because he will have eternal life. Moreover, he is not judged because he has believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God, Jesus. He has come to the Light of God. We can believe this because of the witness of Jesus from heaven, because of the witness of John the Baptist from earth (John 3:22-36) and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. If we don't believe, the wrath of God abides on us right now.

"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." John 3:17-19 (NASB)

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Romans 8:9 (NASB)

- F. Controversary Over What "Born of Water" Means

Theologians generally agree about the meaning and role of the Spirit in being born. The meaning of the water in our salvation has been debated at length.⁸ Categories of theories for its meaning include:

1. Literal water meaning: a) baptized in water, or b) symbolic of the baptism of repentance (Acts 19:4) which John the Baptist did as a washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5).
2. Water is symbolic of the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit, e.g., born of the water, and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5), a well within us springing up to eternal life (John 4:14), and from our innermost being rivers of living water will flow (John 7:38).
3. Water symbolizes the physical birth, e.g., amniotic fluid.
4. Water symbolizes the Word of God.

VII. Selah (Pause and consider)

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13 (NASB)

VIII. The New Birth is Supernatural

The fact that new birth is supernatural is born out in gospels, including John's text. Salvation is from above, not earthly and is not man's doing. Note the specific word usage in John:

- A. "Children" in John 1:12 is derived from the base word τέκνον (teknon),⁹ which speaks to inheritance, adoption as children of God; the prominence, power and right of our new birth to be children of God.

- B. "Believe in" in John 1:12 is derived from πιστεύω εἰς (pisteuō eis),¹⁰ to put faith in. It is in the present tense, active voice, which means to keep on believing, continuous activity of faith. It is more than knowledge; it is trust, reliance in all Jesus is revealed in His name as Savior and Lord.

- C. In John 1:13, in the phrase "who were born...of God;" "born" is derived from the base word γεννάω (gennaō),¹¹ which means to beget children, to give birth to. In this case, they are born not of blood but of God. Brown¹² notes that this birth is "not of superior human descent, not of human generation at all, not of man in any manner of way," but it is of God's will.

IX. The Word of God Plays a Significant Role in Being Born Again

Scripture shows us that we are brought forth by the word of Truth, born again through the living and enduring word of God, and that faith comes with the word of God. This is the very work of God's word:

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of Truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. James 1:18 (NASB)

...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 1 Peter 1:23 (NASB)

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. Romans 10:17 (NASB)

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)

X. The New Birth Changes a Person

- A. What we choose to do, changes; we no longer practice sin as a habit of life. Our life is an increasing extent is marked by love of God and His people. Our faith in Jesus becomes so important it can overcome who we once were, swallowing up who we used to be. The drug addict, prostitute, pimp, liar and murderer cease to be who we are.

No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:9-10 (NASB)

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 1 John 5:1-4 (NASB)



BIBLE

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