

John 3

Part 2

Nicodemus Did Not Understand

John 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

1. Nicodemus understood Jesus to mean that one must be born a second time physically.
2. In his mind it was impossible for one "old" [grown] to "enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born."
3. The construction of the Greek sentence makes it clear that he totally rejected the possibility of a second physical birth. In his mind it was absolutely absurd.
 - a. This sentence in Greek has the negative particle "may" [meaning not] to begin it anticipating a negative answer.
 - b. The NASB translated has shown this with the words "**He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?**"
4. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and most likely had rejected the preaching of John the Baptist who called upon the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3).

Mark 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 3:3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;

- a. These wicked men refused to repent and because of this John refused to baptize them. (Matt. 3:7,8).

Matt 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood [offspring] of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Matt 3:8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

- b. Luke stressed these men rejected the baptism of John. (Lk. 7:30).

Luke 7:30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John..

5. The disciples of Jesus were also baptizing (Jn. 4:1,2), but the baptism of the Great Commission did not exist at this time. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mk. 16:15,16).
6. The baptism of the Great Commission began on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 2:1, 37,38).

Jesus And The New Birth

John 3:5 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.

1. Jesus once again responded with the words “truly, truly” emphasizing the importance and truthfulness of what He was about to proclaim to Nicodemus and to all.
2. Jesus taught one must be “born of water and the Spirit.”
 - a. Jesus was teaching one must experience a new birth to “enter into the kingdom of God.”
 - 1) The kingdom was “at hand” when these words were uttered.
 - 2) It did not come until the day of Pentecost. See Acts 2:1.
 - 3) On that day Peter declared Jesus was already exalted at the right hand of God. (Acts 2:33).

Acts 2:33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

- b. Both John the Baptist and Jesus were preaching “the kingdom of heaven,” that is “the kingdom of God” was nigh or near. (Matt. 3:1; 4:17).
- c. One cannot be saved without entering into God’s kingdom. The brethren at Colossae had been baptized and had become a part of the kingdom by being buried in the waters of baptism. (Col. 2:12; 1:13).

Col 2:12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Col 1:13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

- d. One enters God’s kingdom through the new birth of water and Spirit.
- e. The work of the Holy Spirit is vital in the new birth.
 - 1) He changes men through the gospel, the word of God, the word of truth.
 - 2) He does not do this apart from the gospel, but through it.
 - 3) One must believe and obey the message of the Holy Spirit - the gospel. (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18, 21; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

1 Cor 4:15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet {you would} not {have} many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

James 1:18 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 1:21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and {all} that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

1 Pet 1:23 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 Pet 1:24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
1 Pet 1:25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

- 4) One must also be born of water speaking of immersion in water and the coming forth from the water.
 - 5) Jesus later taught the necessity of baptism. (Matt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:16).
 - 6) The necessity of baptism as a response to faith, not as a work of merit, is stressed in the New Testament. (Acts 2:38; 8:13,14, 36-40;10:48; 22:16; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:18; Gal. 3:26, 27; Rom. 6:3,4).
3. There are two requirements for a physical birth
- a. There must be a begetal and there must be a delivery.
 - b. Without these two things you cannot have a physical birth.
4. There are also two requirements for a spiritual birth - there must be a begetal and there must be a delivery.
- a. The begetal occurs when one hears and accepts in his heart the word of God [the gospel] delivered by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of His word.
 - b. The delivery occurs when one comes forth from the waters of baptism to walk in the newness of life. (Rom. 6:3-5).

Rom 6:3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?
Rom 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.
Rom 6:5 For if we have become united with {Him} in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be {in the likeness} of His resurrection,

5. Many to avoid the necessity of baptism have distorted the words "born of water" to refer to the physical birth.
- a. It is argued that a baby is born of water [the amniotic fluid that flows from the mother's body prior to birth] and this is what Jesus was teaching must occur.

Born of Water - Physical Birth
Born of Spirit - New Birth
Baptism - Not essential to salvation - only an outward sign of salvation.

- b. This theory, if correct, means that anyone delivered by caesarean section would be ineligible to enter the kingdom of God since there is no water in that procedure.
- c. This is a recent theory to deny the importance and necessity of baptism.
- d. It was not held by the early writers often called "the church fathers."
- e. The word "Spirit" is erroneously interpreted to mean the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion, but water has nothing to do with the salvation of man.

6. This doctrine is clearly false for a number of reasons.

a. The Bible does not refer to the physical birth of man as a birth of water.

b. Jesus used a single preposition “eks” [of, lit. out of] showing He was talking about one birth - not two births.

1) A literal translation of the Greek is “except anyone is born of [out of] water and spirit, he cannot to enter into the kingdom of the God.”

2) Some translations insert the definite article “the” before “spirit” [Spirit] and not before water indicating one birth - not two birth.

c. Jesus was not telling Nicodemus he must experience a physical birth that he and all humans have already experienced. He was being told it was essential to experience a spiritual birth to be saved.

d. This interpretation of making the water refer to the physical birth ignores the clear teachings about the importance of baptism in regard to forgiveness of sins and the new life. (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:12; 3:1,2).

Acts 2:38 Peter {said} to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

Rom 6:3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?
Rom 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Col 2:12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Col 3:1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Col 3:2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

e. This interpretation has been developed because many view baptism as a meritorious work and clearly man cannot earn his salvation. (Rom. 6:23; 11:6; Eph. 2:5, 8-10).

1) Baptism is not a meritorious act, but is an act of faith.

2) Faith is called a “work” in John 6:29, but it is not a meritorious action.

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

3) Baptism, like repentance, confession and living a life pleasing to God, is not a meritorious action.

4) All of these things are required as a response of faith, but not one of them earns a person salvation.

Comment:

1. What Jesus taught here is taught over and over again in the scriptures. (Jn. 3:5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5).

John 3:5 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.

1 Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Eph 5:26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

2. The following table reveals the harmony of these scriptures.

John 3:5	1 Corinthians 12:13	Ephesians 5:26	Titus 3:5
Spirit	Spirit	Word	Holy Spirit
Water [baptism]	Baptism	Water	Washing
Kingdom	Body	Cleansed	Saved

- a. It should be observed that all of these passages are teaching the same thing with different wording.
- b. The Holy Spirit, through the word, leads men to faith, repentance and confession.
- c. This leads one to be born of water, that is, come forth from the waters of baptism cleansed of sin by the blood of Jesus, to walk in the newness of life and be a part of Christ's body [the church, the kingdom].

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)