

John 3:1-17
Born Again

I've come to deeply value and offer gratitude to God for those whose lives have been intertwined with the church from their earliest memories, who can't recall a time when they weren't following Christ. Their journey is a powerful testament to faith. Yet, amid such inspiring narratives, it's crucial not to overlook the reality that every believer, regardless of their upbringing, has a pivotal moment of conversion. Equally important is guarding against the misconception that lacking a vivid memory of this moment signifies a lack of salvation. The essence of this passage lies not in pinpointing a specific conversion event, but in embracing the truth that every disciple of Jesus experiences a spiritual rebirth. While the exact timing may elude us, what matters is the undeniable reality of that transformative encounter. With this said, I want to share three important observations on the matter of being born again drawn from the text.

First observation, any confession regarding Jesus that falls short of proclaiming him the promised Messiah is no confession at all. **V1-3** “Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus’ words seem pleasant enough, complementary in nature, even. But his words were offensive.

His words fell utterly short and were evidence of him being in the dark. And Jesus cuts to the heart of his lostness. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Jesus was saying, “Hear me good Nicodemus, you are dead in your sins and in need of rebirth”. Jesus has no patience for our niceties regarding him. The conclusions we have arrived to on our own regarding Jesus’ identity are rubbish. If we cannot with confidence and boldness confess him to be Lord, the promised Messiah, we are no different than Nicodemus. We remain in the dark. Or stated this way, we must be born again.

Rom 1:16 “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.”

Rom 10:8-9 “⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

Phil 2:9-11 “⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Confess now, rather than later. Church, any confession regarding Jesus that falls short of proclaiming him the promised Messiah is no confession at all.

Second observation, we need not be able to explain it to believe it. V4-8 “⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be

born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, 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. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." How many things have we accepted in this life as true even though we cannot explain or fully understand them. Many things! Jesus, by his response to Nicodemus' question is not applying some Jedi mind trick on Nicodemus. Nicodemus needed to wrestle with the truth that some things can't be understood, or adequately explained, or accomplished by us, especially the most important thing, being born again. Most importantly, Jesus was teaching him and is teaching us we need not be able to explain it to believe it. He does so, as only God could, by his example of the wind. No one questions the reality of the wind even though we cannot see it or explain its origins, but we certainly can feel it and see its affects. The Holy Spirt and rebirth are no different. It is all from God.

1 Cor 12:3 ³ "Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit."

Eph 1:13-14 ¹³ "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of

our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

2 Cor 5:16-19 “¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” **We have the message of reconciliation but God, by His Holy Spirit, does the work of reconciliation. We need not be able to explain it to believe it.**

Finally, we know we have been born again because we believe.

V9-17 “⁹Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world

might be saved through him.” How is one born again? Simply by belief in Christ Jesus. Our time of conversion, our rebirth occurred the moment we believed. Not when we were baptized or when we first received the Lord’s Supper. We were born again the moment we believed in him, Jesus the Christ. You may not remember a time in your life when you weren’t a follower of Jesus. Or you may be able to give the exact date of your rebirth. Neither matter. What matters is you believe, and because you believe you have indeed been born again.

John 1:9-13 “⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Born again. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen.