

# John 3:1-10

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, everyone. Open up your copy of God's Word to the Gospel of John. I'm going to continue our study in John's Gospel, and today we're going to enter into the infamous John chapter 3, and something that we all grow up hearing a lot of.

So before we dive into it, join me in a word of prayer. Father, we come to you just needy and helpless today in asking that your Word would work deeply in our souls.

And if we haven't come here today expecting to hear from you, that you would change that. That we would have faith to believe the promises that we study today, and you would apply it to our hearts.

And as at this time it would be pleasing to you, in Christ's name, amen. Alright, we are in John chapter 3 today. Some of the background, TJ did a wonderful job last week.

But it's always good to just sort of reconnect to what's going on. But the Gospel of John gives us a very clear portrait about the identity of who Jesus actually is.

[ 1 : 14 ] And it also forces us to either receive Him or reject Him. This Jesus that is portrayed by John the Evangelist. We have to come to Him or flee from Him.

It doesn't really leave much choice in this Gospel. But before we get into John chapter 3, just a little background and reconnection to last week. Jesus is now in Jerusalem with His disciples.

And He has cleansed out the temple in His holy and righteous anger. And He goes on staying in Jerusalem with His disciples. And people see Him do many signs and many miracles.

And it says that He actually kind of fled the crowd to avoid the fanfare. Seeing that their expressed faith wasn't really real.

It was superficial. And He knew it. He knew that. He didn't entrust Himself to them. So later on, we see the story here in chapter 3 of Nicodemus, a Pharisee.

[ 2 : 20 ] They came to Jesus at nighttime. Probably to avoid the dangerous implications of actually being seen with Jesus. Because many in His own religious order were against Jesus.

So He sought Jesus out to take a closer look to hear Him out. He's genuinely intrigued by Jesus and His claims. So we learn, though, in this interaction, some very serious things for our spiritual lives that are described in this interaction with Nicodemus.

And it answers a massive question for us that John addresses. That question is, how can a fallen sinner that is dead to God actually enter into the kingdom of God?

How can those who are dead and sin, how can they have new spiritual life? How can those who are rebels against the king have peace with him and then enter into his kingdom as his loyal subjects?

Enter into his presence. That's the question. And the answer is we must be born again. That's where we're going. But the kingdom of God is God's active reign or His kingly rule, both in the present and in the future, that we get to experience in our souls once we come to know Christ.

[ 3 : 57 ] It's not just a future reign, but a current reign. Right now, the kingdom is here and it is coming. Your kingdom come, your will be done, the kingdom is coming, but also the kingdom of heaven is here, it's at hand.

Both are expressed in the New Testament. Christ ushered in the kingdom of God when He came the first time. He brought it in. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel, He said. It exists with us now in the present and is also spreading. His kingdom is spreading throughout the entire world by the preaching of the gospel.

And it will be perfectly realized when Christ comes to consummate at the end with His return. And so, again, this is serious, but the coming of God's reign, His kingdom, either forces us, it demands us to either repent of our sin or it brings us into judgment.

It's one or the other. And so, let's read our passage today. Today, we're going to look at John 3, 1-10, the first little section of John 3.

[ 5 : 08 ] We read, Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This 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.

And Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 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? And Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you, you must be born again.

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

[ 6 : 26 ] So, and we go on to verse 9 and 10. Nicodemus said to Him, How can these things be? And Jesus answered him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

So we will stop there to begin unpacking this section. But one of the ways I like to approach passages that I've found helpful to break that up is do it by questions.

And the first one is, Why do we need to be born again? Why do we need to be born again? And we see this toward the end, some of this at the end of chapter 2, just by way of reminder.

If you look at verse 23 of chapter 2, When He, Jesus, was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs and miracles that He was doing.

But Jesus, on His part, did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all people, and needed no one to bear witness about man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

[ 7 : 37 ] And so, we see here a couple of things, and from last week's passage and our passage today, about what being born again is not. Just to clarify, it's not merely, this is important, not merely affirming the supernatural in Jesus.

Jesus did not entrust Himself or commit Himself to those crowds that were witnessing His signs and His miracles. He knew what was in their hearts. He knew that many of them were not expressing genuine saving faith in Him, but were merely enthused, mesmerized by all the signs and miracles that He was doing.

So, belief in Jesus' name, therefore, isn't just an intellectual assent to a true reality. It's not just, Hey, yeah, there's Jesus.

You know what? There's something really amazing about Him. There's something different about Him. That's not what being born again is. One of their own religious leaders that we see here today, Nicodemus, and others, it says in our passage, they affirm something special about Jesus too.

He says, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher that's come from God. Because no one could do the signs that you're doing unless God was with him. So even Nicodemus, notice that it says we in that verse.

[ 9 : 04 ] And not just Nicodemus, he's implying that even other people, maybe other Pharisees as well, notice that there's something different about Jesus. And that God is actually with him.

So, and he calls him Rabbi, which is a very respectful term, because Jesus, especially because Jesus had actually never been to their schools, and received their formal training, as you can read about in chapter 7, verse 15.

But yet, yet, Jesus does not respond to Nicodemus by saying, hey, you know what? I wish what you're seeing now is what all those other people saw.

He doesn't say that. I wish that they could see the truth that you see, Nicodemus. He doesn't respond to that. Instead, he catches them completely off guard. And Jesus says, Nicodemus, listen very carefully to me.

You cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless you're born again. You'll never even see the kingdom of God. And so, it's not, being born again is not just beholding signs and miraculous things that Jesus may do, and being mesmerized by them, and even giving credit.

[ 10 : 18 ] Right? That's what he says. Like, no one could do it unless God was with him. That doesn't save anyone. So, one of the great dangers of signs and miracles is because you don't need a supernatural life to be amazed by them.

Satan himself knows that Jesus is the Son of God and that he works miracles. It's Mark 1.24. So then, merely acknowledging that there's something supernatural about Jesus does not give you the

key to the kingdom of God.

So, is there someone you know that, right now even, that may know some true things about Jesus, recognize something special or different about Jesus, but it hasn't really gone beyond that?

We see here, so it's not just affirming the supernatural in Jesus. It's also not merely getting new religion as we see here in this passage.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, which means the separated ones. During the rule of Herod the Great, there were several thousand of them. He had lots of religious zeal for the law of Moses.

[ 11 : 35 ] He had dedicated his life to studying and memorizing huge portions of the Old Testament Scripture. And most Pharisees at this time prayed two hours a day, they fasted two days a week, and they tithed everything.

He said Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, meaning that he was one of the head leaders in the Sanhedrin, the religious council of the Jews at that time. He was the head of most of us in terms of his religious zeal.

Yet, Jesus again says, he tells them that's not enough to enter into the kingdom of God. He refers to the Pharisees in Matthew 23, 27-28, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and uncleanness. So, you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

So, just getting religious, having religious fervor, doesn't equal being born again. You think of someone you may know or you yourself that becoming a Christian is just adopting some new customs, some new traditions.

[ 12 : 59 ] It's not, or do you think it's just about outward, external behavior modification, where you deem certain things as good and certain things as bad and you try not to do bad things and try to do good things, that your relationship with God just boils down to a bunch of do's and don'ts.

That's not it. So, Jesus says that either affirming the supernatural in Him or just simply having religious zeal does not equal entrance to the kingdom of God.

There's a big problem. So, why does Jesus say that you must be born again? Why does He say that? Well, the answer is, make all these connections in the Scripture, the answer is that man, fallen man, we are born spiritually dead.

Our sin, our falling short, or our missing of the mark of God's intended purpose has brought all men and all women to spiritual death.

As it says in Ephesians 2, just make the connections. You ever done it before? Why do you have to be born again? The connection is because you're spiritually dead.

[ 14 : 19 ] You have to have a new life. Ephesians 2, verse 1 through 3, you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, which is Satan, the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of man time.

So the Greek word for dead here means corpse. It means a lifeless body. It's what you see in a cemetery or a funeral home.

It's spiritual corpses before God because sin has done that to us. Sin is awful. So traditionally many people look at this there's been debate obviously over the history of the church but Pelagius taught back in the earlier days of the church a false teacher that man was born a clean slate that he wasn't affected by the sin of Adam and that he just really just needed some help some moral guidance and he would be okay like man had the ability to do it he just needed some help and that's what Jesus came to do not true a little further on you would call them the semi Pelagians or Arminians they would take it as well man isn't a clean slate he is tainted by sin he has an issue he's very very sick and he needs a doctor to heal him we also would contend based on a lot of other debaters and faithful men in the church like Luther

Calvin Jonathan Edwards that's not how it is man is spiritually dead he doesn't need a teacher he doesn't need a doctor he needs a miracle worker someone who can actually bring him back from death to life so man's senses are darkened by sin we're separated from God this is the grave condition that we're focusing on Paul wrote in 1st Corinthians 2 14 the natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God they are folly to him he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned so it stands to reason right that if someone's dead they also can't see they also can't hear this is the point Nicodemus recognized as others did there's something

supernatural about Jesus but that wasn't enough at least at this point he still was confused he didn't quite understand it now later in the gospel of

John we do see Nicodemus show back up and when they were trying to condemn Jesus among the council of religious leaders he actually stood up for Jesus and he goes is it wrong is it wrong for us to condemn a man without you know bringing him in this way against our law so he stood up for Jesus and he also helped bury Jesus along with Joseph of Arimathea so maybe he got it at some point but we have a deep need for change why do you and why do I constantly have this push this desire to remake ourselves why is that why can't we just kind of settle on it why do we love new things why is it there well millions of dollars are spent every year on psychiatrists psychologists who want to just change their behavior hours at the gym trying to change your outward looks and be more attractive tons of money on cosmetic surgery to look more pretty on the outside people desire they want to look different feel different and act different but

[18:37] Jesus says the real problem is not without it's within the problem is your heart has been corrupted by sin he said that in Mark 7 verse 20 he said what comes out of a person is what defiles him for from within out of the heart of man comes all kinds of evil he goes on to say all these evil things come from within and they defile a person so the fact that he's saying you have to be born again he's saying that there's nothing that isn't in us not just a makeover of the old but a completely new spiritual life we cannot it stands to reason that we cannot look to outward superficial things to bring about change in our soul we can't look for outward remedies when the problem is within so Jesus says this in Nicodemus you need a new spiritual life not just a repair or makeover of the old but a new spiritual life this is our need as well so all this goes to under the question of why do we need new birth so a great need we need it because we are separated from

God because apart from Christ we are spiritually dead hearts corrupted by sin stands to reason right so number two the second question how does God give us new birth how does God do it how does he give us new birth we see in verses three through six the answer verses three through six he says truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God he said to him how can a man be born when he is old can he enter a second time into his mother's womb be born is he still confused Jesus answered truly truly I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God that which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of spirit is spirit so he doesn't hold back Jesus doesn't hold back he repeats himself and he goes truly you must be born again to see the kingdom of

God so due to the severity of our own spiritual condition before God Jesus says break this up no one can no one can so that's an absolute statement no one can meaning no one can even see or perceive the kingdom of God unless and here's the condition unless he is born again and the Greek means born from above so something coming from heaven so we see Nicodemus pick you know he picks up on this idea that yeah I see you're using this figurative language but I still don't understand it how can someone be born when he's old how does this happen and Jesus responds in verse five by saying a fallen sinner cannot enter the kingdom of God unless one is born of water and the spirit so when he says water here he's not referring to literal water but the need for cleansing as we read about in

Ezekiel and other places usually in the Old Testament when water is referred to in this way is expressing this desire for renewal or spiritual cleansing especially in conjunction with the Holy Spirit Psalm 51 verse 9 David David mentions that sprinkle me clean with clean water David says thus Jesus made reference to the spiritual washing that we need purification of our soul this accomplished by the Holy Spirit so look at verse 6 Jesus is indicating that people become a part of an earthly family like all of us are we were born into that family by physical birth not hard to understand but then he goes on to say yeah and if you're going to have a spiritual birth it only comes to be a part of God's family through the Spirit that's it so here's the stunning connection both of those births are out of our personal control you didn't choose to be born you are dependent on outside agents for both of those and so another word that is used in the scripture to speak of being born again is the term regeneration it's used

I think only two times or maybe three times in the New Testament but it means a new birth a reproduction a renewal or recreation it's used to denote the restoration of a thing to its original pristine state a renovation of something that has deteriorated often used in this term as a renewal or restoration of spiritual life and so we see here be born again being regenerated and so how does this happen Jesus says that who is the agent of this it is the Holy Spirit so the father had an act in

our salvation the son had an act in our salvation and the Holy Spirit has an act in our salvation he is the one who gives us new spiritual birth he reveals as it says in 1 Corinthians 2 the Holy Spirit is the one who reveals to us the truth about

[ 24 : 36 ] God he shows us the secret things of God man through his own intellect and exertion as much as we want to throw down understand things we only can attain a certain knowledge of God but that can often fall short of a saving knowledge this is something that's beyond the natural life our physical faculties long ago God promised this we read from Jeremiah earlier Nathan read from Jeremiah that's one reference to the promise of the spirit coming to give us a new heart one of my favorite is seen in Ezekiel so this is a prophecy about the Holy Spirit coming and what he will do to our hearts and our souls!

this is Ezekiel 11 verse 19 I'll read it to you God says I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them I'll remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh!

See that like sin makes our hearts hard unfeeling toward God that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them and they shall be my people and I will be their God and if you go down to later on Ezekiel 36 verse 25 it says I will sprinkle!

Here's that reference I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from your uncleanness and from all your idols I will cleanse you and this is the part that connects it directly to being regenerated born again I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and here's the spirit verse 27 I will put my spirit capital S within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules so what happens in regeneration is not just getting some new religion it's not just improving on what you have on the outside it is a new birth given to us by the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit is the one who applies the work of Jesus to our souls and he raises us from spiritual death to life

Ephesians chapter 2 just after we just mentioned that man is dead in his trespasses Ephesians 2 verse 4 but God being rich in mercy because of the great love which he loved us even as we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved let me give you an analogy that's going to come later in John but when Lazarus died he was dead right he was not coming back his sisters were sad that Lazarus had died he was in a tomb and Jesus shows up and what did Jesus do what did he say to Lazarus he didn't say Lazarus if you want me to make you alive come out he said Lazarus come out and so he rose from death to life and he came out it is a physical metaphor for what happens to us spiritually and as we read it's caused by

[ 28 : 15 ] God's mercy and his great love for us Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3 that we have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead so when or excuse me I should say how does this new birth take place like how does it happen it happens when the Holy Spirit enables us not merely to reach an intellectual knowledge about the gospel but he enables us to believe it to love it resulting in regeneration Peter went on to say in 1 Peter 1 23 since you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God not to use too much anatomy or biology but the term seed here that 1 Peter uses is the male reproductive seed and he says that at some point

God puts his word in you and at some point that grows resulting in a spiritual birth that is the gospel that is the word of God it's what Christ has accomplished for us and at some point the Holy Spirit applies that from death to life so there was some point in your life you heard the gospel message you read it you understood it and at some point the Holy Spirit applied it to your soul and you truly actually believed it as it says in 2 Thessalonians 2 that the Spirit called you through our gospel he called you through our gospel so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus this effectual call at some point we resisted the Holy Spirit at some point we said get lost we don't want to hear it get lost and God could have in judgment been like okay die in your sin but he didn't do like a little please let me in he and thankfully he came in and he saved us you have nothing to boast about we have nothing to boast about he saved us according to his own grace and mercy so do you see these things do you long to embrace

Christ do you hate your sin even though you still sin you hate it and long to be freed from it if so probably a child of God probably living in his kingdom born anew of the spirit and then lastly the last question we see answered in verses 8 through 10 what are the results or maybe what is the outcome of being born again and so here Jesus uses a couple words wind and spirit which translate the same Greek and Hebrew words so he is simply saying that you cannot physically see the wind and the wind can't be controlled by man you see the effects of the wind the effects of the wind are

seen and felt and he's saying so it is with the work of the Holy Spirit Jesus calls him the teacher of Israel I remember seeing on a church sign you know in front of this church building the honorable pastor reverend doctor so and so if we ever put that on our sign just like fire us but but this was his role he was like one of the best teachers in

Israel was like you should know out of Deuteronomy 30 verse 6 the Lord God will circumcise your heart born again and the heart of your offspring so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul that you may live so physical circumcision was just an outward!

sign of an inward need that we had so the spirit cannot be physically seen the spirit cannot be controlled by man but the evidence or the outcome of his work in a regenerate person is seen and is visible right some of you who came to know the Lord you know might not have been exactly overnight but you're just different you're not who you once were the things that you used to love and cherish you now hate you want to honor God you love him you obey him out of love and grace you don't obey him because you just have to but we delight in him is there evidence of the Holy Spirit work in your life and in your character so another term the scripture uses here is that term of a new creation God by his power in the Holy Spirit can give us a second genesis it's not just improvement on the old but a new creation a new nature which really is who you are forgiven and cleansed as [ 33 : 48 ] Paul writes 2nd Corinthians 5 17 through 18 therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old has passed away and behold the new has come all this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself so in regeneration the dead sinner is given a new heart and a new nature by God that enables him or strengthens him to walk in gracious obedience to God's law to act live and think in accordance to what God would have for us his will this is our new identity it's so funny to watch modern day psychiatrists they're like they're all about identity now they talk about identity a lot but it is true that we live act and think in accordance with how we view ourselves it just is but if you are in

Christ this is who you are you are you are a new creation not just dry religion and morality but true love and affections for God that you didn't have before you have these holy desires for God that didn't exist God gave you a longing and a yearning to know him and follow him is not who you once were though we still battle sin we're battling!

out of our new nature because we're battling the remaining corruption of the flesh! If you have truly been born again you have a new and holy nature and you are no longer moved towards sinful objects as you were before the things that you once loved you now hate you can hardly understand it but so it is that your thoughts and your tastes are radically changed you long for that very holiness which was once irksome to hear and you loathe those vain pursuits which were once your delights I can look back on who I was before a believer and just recognize that it wasn't just an outward physical change like I just need to stop cussing I just need to stop you know having a hot attitude I just need to quit this it was I want to follow Christ I love him I need him and I hope that that's been true for you as well and if it's not if you're concerned about that come and talk to us but I would assume that most of us here this isn't unfamiliar language you know that the holy in in closing turn to Titus chapter 3 flip over to Titus chapter 3 and let's just look at verse 1 so we see the the old we see what God has done and then we see the new right in this passage Titus 3 verse 1 for we ourselves were once foolish disobedient let us raise slaves to various passions and pleasures passing our days in malice and envy hated by others and hating one another that's who we were before

Christ no exceptions right verse 4 but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared he saved us not we helped him save us he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life so this is what we have to do if we're going to see the kingdom of God we're going to enter into the kingdom of God we must be born again in his grace we can see it as grace that of the Spirit's work in our lives so join me in prayer asking God to apply his word to us to!