Nicodemus: The New Birth  
*(John 2:23-3:21)*

**Introduction**

A. *Familiar Conversation*: The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus which resulted in a short discourse on the new birth may be one of the most familiar in the New Testament.

B. *Spiritual Birth*: The spiritual birth taught by Jesus, seemingly rather simple, has also been one of the most controversial passages of the New Testament.

C. *Fundamental*: This conversation and the meaning of the spiritual birth, however, is as fundamental as any teaching of Jesus concerning man and the coming kingdom.

D. *All Truth*: This teaching, along with many other truths our Lord taught, is much like the prophetic utterances in the Old Testament: they are only fully understood and grasp in the light of the Spirit's revelation of "all truth" to the apostles.

**Jesus Meets Nicodemus**

A. *Jesus at Jerusalem*: Where was Jesus when this conversation took place (2:23)? Why was he there (2:23)? What effect had Jesus had on the Jews at the feast (2:23)? Why did this belief develop (2:23)? How does this relate to the entire theme of the Gospel of John (20:30-31)? Despite considerable belief what did Jesus know generally about the Jews and how did he respond to this (2:24)?

B. *Nicodemus*: What do we know about Nicodemus' party affiliation among the Jews (3:1)? What do we know about Pharisees in general (Matt 23:1-7; Matt 15:6-9; Acts 23:6-8)? What else do we know about Nicodemus (3:1)? What does "ruler of the Jews" suggest (see Luke 24:19-20; Acts 4:6-9)? What do we know about many of the rulers of the Jews (John 12:42-43)?

C. *Nicodemus and Jesus*: When did Nicodemus come to Jesus (3:2)? Why do you suppose he came at this time? How did he address Jesus (3:2)? What had Nicodemus concluded that led to this "title" of address (3:2)? How did Nicodemus come to his conclusion about Jesus (3:2)?

**Jesus Instructs Nicodemus**

A. *Opening Remarks*: Jesus answers Nicodemus rather abruptly with what (3:3)? Verse 3 says man must be "born__________"—what does your version say? From the context (verses 4-5) why might either express the point? Why is the new birth important (3:3)? How did Nicodemus respond and why (3:4)?

B. *Jesus' Explanation*: What was Jesus' answer of explanation to Nicodemus (3:5)? What two elements are factors in Jesus' explanation of being born again or from above (3:5)? Again, why is this birth important (3:5)? What does Jesus say further to explain the birth Nicodemus is thinking about and the birth he himself is teaching (3:6)?

C. *Further Explanation*: What word did Jesus use to suggest that Nicodemus was surprised and astonished by this teaching (3:7)? What illustration did Jesus use in seeking to alleviate Nicodemus' amazement (3:8)? Did this give Nicodemus relief (3:9)? What does it appear that Jesus is saying of or to Nicodemus in this response? Remember, Nicodemus is a Pharisee (3:10)?
D. Jesus the Witness: What does Jesus mean: We speak that which we know and bear witness of what we have seen (3:11; John 8:28; John 14:6-11)? What might “earthly” things in contrast to “spiritual” things mean (3:12)? Who is the one who would understand and teach heavenly things—and why is that so (3:13)?

E. Moses and Jesus: What is the reference to Moses talking about (3:14)? What is the contrast drawn from this story to what will happen to the “Son of Man” (3:14; see John 8:28; 12:32, 34)? How does this benefit man and on what basis (3:15)?

Salvation and Judgment

A. John’s Comments: How does John summarize salvation by grace through faith (3:16)? How does John describe Jesus’ mission in the world (3:17)? How does he relate belief to judgment—positively and negatively (3:18)? How does judgment come to men (3:19)? Why do men not escape judgment (3:20)? Why then do men come to the light (3:21)?

B. New Birth/Titus 3:5-7: What term does Paul use that is equivalent to the “new birth” (Titus 3:5)? Where else is “washing” used and what element is included (Eph 5:26)? What command is “washing” related to (Acts 22:16)? The washing of regeneration is not by what (Titus 3:5)? In contrast to “works” how does God save men (Titus 3:5)? Is it by mercy alone that God saves man (Titus 3:5)? What does the Holy Spirit accomplish in man by this washing (Titus 3:5)? How was the Spirit poured out on sinners (Titus 3:6)? What is the means and result of all this (Titus 3:7)?

C. New Creatures: How does a man become a “new creature” (2 Cor 5:17)? How does a man get into Christ Jesus and to what does this connect him (Rom 6:3)? How is this baptism defined (Rom 6:4)? What does this burial and resurrection bring forth (Rom 6:4)? When united with Christ in His death what or who is crucified (Rom 6:5-7)?

D. Application: To whom had Jesus promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5)? What would the apostles receive when they received the Spirit and what would they become (Acts 1:8)? What happened to the apostles ten days later (Acts 2:1-4)? Who alone received this baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:26; Acts 2:1, 14)? What effect did the power of the Spirit have on about 3000 souls on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37)? What did they ask and what were they told to do (Acts 2:37-38)? What did they gladly receive and do (Acts 2:40-41)? What do we know about their lives afterward (Acts 2:42)? How did the Spirit by water bring forth new creatures that day?

Conclusion:

A. Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit came to the apostles and empowered them with the gospel of God which they preached as the Spirit gave them utterance on the first Pentecost after Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 2).

B. The Gospel: Note that it was the gospel, the word the sinners heard, that pricked their hearts and provoked them to respond to the message of repentance and baptism for the remission of sin.

C. New Creature: Observe how these hearers of the word became through repentance and baptism new creatures in Christ Jesus who continued steadfastly to walk in righteousness as evidence of their transformation through the birth by the water and the Spirit that day.