



## SESSION 13 | JOHN 3:5-13

### JOHN 3:1-21 | THE FIRST PASSOVER: JESUS AND NICODEMUS

- *Verses 1-4 – See session 12*
- Verse 5 –
  - Jesus gave the explanation Nicodemus sought, answering to the same issue as in verse 3, the entrance **into the kingdom of God**. Thus, once again, we have no reference point to evangelism in the age of grace.
  - To clarify His earlier words about being **born again**, Jesus says that one must be **born of water and of the Spirit**. The two most common interpretations are as follows:
    - Water is physical birth and Spirit is spiritual birth.
    - Water is baptism and Spirit is receiving the Holy Ghost.
  - Both of these interpretations lack scriptural basis and are rather based on various Christian theologies.
  - Because Nicodemus is later chastised for not knowing these things (v. 11), we have to presume that they had been previously revealed.
    - The most obvious reference to something Nicodemus would have known would be Ezekiel 36:25-27.
    - In effect, then, Jesus was saying to Nicodemus, “I am who you think I am, and for you or anyone else to enter the Kingdom, they are going to have to come through Me, for only I can give them the **clean water** that will cause you to **be clean from all your filthiness...** (Ezek. 36:25).
- Verses 6-7 –
  - The need is to be *born from above* so that the flesh problem could be overcome.
  - Paul later explained that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God** (1 Cor. 15:50).
  - To overcome this problem, new birth is necessary. This happens to Israel **at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed** (1 Cor. 15:52).
  - Because of the need to be *born from above*, Nicodemus was told to **Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again**.
- Verse 8 –
  - That the illustration of the blowing wind is a remark about the work of the Spirit is undeniable. In fact, the word **wind** is πνεῦμα, which is later translated **Spirit**. Furthermore, to be born again is all but now defined as to be **born of the Spirit**.
  - These verses are sometimes twisted to be Calvinistic in nature, but only because Calvinism has made them to be such by ignoring dispensational differences and equating *Born Again* to the Christian life. But Nicodemus would not have taken these words to mean, “You must trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and receive the gift of salvation which God is offering through Him.” Rather, the issue at hand is entrance to the Kingdom (v. 3) and this entrance required a *new birth* of the Spirit and was fully a matter of God’s election of Israel and God’s timing.

- Verses.9-10 –
  - Nicodemus wants to know how **these things** of new birth by the Spirit can be.
  - Because **these things** were clearly spoken of by the prophets, Nicodemus is chided as a **master of Israel** who should have known these things. Compare, for example, Jeremiah 31:33, 32:39, Ezekiel 11:19, 18:31, etc., each verses which speak of this *new birth* of the nation.
- Verse 11 –
  - Of interest in verse 11 is the use of the plural pronoun **we**, in contrast to vv. 3, 5, 7, and 12.
  - Who are **we**?
    - One could surmise a trinitarian use, but without much evidence.
    - Further, one could surmise that Jesus includes the prophets, but He had had not direct reference to any prophetic writing.
    - I take this to be a reference to Jesus and His followers compared to Nicodemus and the religious leaders.
- Verse 12 –
  - The interpretive question for this verse is whether Jesus is speaking of specific **earthly things** of which He had told Nicodemus, which were subsequently rejected, or whether Jesus is simply giving an illustration noting the fact that the spiritual is more difficult to receive and believe.
  - There appears, both grammatically and contextually, to have been a testimony of **earthly things**. The grammar would imply “since I have told you earthly things....” The context is based in verse 11, **ye receive not our witness**. However, the content of the **earthly things** is not clear.
- Note on John 3:13-21:
  - It is difficult to know for sure when Jesus quit speaking and the author began writing theological commentary. It is possible that these words should *not* be written in red.
  - The first “Red Letter Edition” of the Bible came about in 1999 as a project of Louis Klopsch and T. Dewitt Talmadge.
  - Some reasons to consider that these are words of the author rather than the Lord:
    - Beginning in verse 13 the pronoun changes from the first person to the third person.
    - The words switch to the past tense, and thus should be taken as describing past events (as written by the author in reflection).
    - The words describe events which require completed action (for example: God **gave His only begotten son**).
- Verse 13 –
  - When this verse is taken as “post-game commentary,” the words make the most sense.
  - If spoken by Jesus, they must be spoken prophetically, for He had not yet **ascended up to heaven**.
  - Taken as commentary, the author is speaking to the reader and springboards from the **heavenly things** of verse 12 to explain how Jesus knew these things: He had come **down from heaven** and was now (at the time of the writing) **in heaven**.