

# RIGHTLY DIVIDING<sup>©</sup>

## TITLE: WATER BIRTH

### SCRIPTURE: JOHN 3:5

*“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*

### CONTEXT:

Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus who came to him during the night. Please note that Nicodemus is a Pharisee, ruler of the Jews, and a master teacher to Israel. Jesus takes time to explain for Nicodemus what it means to be born again and as a master teacher he should know these things. Jesus knows that Nicodemus has a shortcoming – his inability to understand heavenly things.

Jesus related being born again to something Nicodemus should understand by being a master teacher – Moses and the serpent of brass in the wilderness (Numbers 21:8-9). Jesus states in John 3:14-15, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Both acts are related to believing for life. The serpent of brass was lifted up for Israel needing to be delivered from the serpent’s bite. As Israel looked upon the lifted serpent, they lived. Christ is lifted up for those needing to be delivered from sin. As Christ is looked upon (lifted up), sinners live and are granted eternal life.

### JOHN 3:5

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EVETTE

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*Sermons for Pastors and Leaders of  
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### JOHN’S HISTORICAL FACTS

**Date and Place of Composition:** According to scholars, John spent his last years at Ephesus where he carried on a ministry of preaching, teaching, and writing. From Ephesus he was exiled to Patmos in the reign of the Emperor Domitian. His Gospel seems to presuppose knowledge of the synoptic and so is placed last in the series possibly somewhere between 80 and 90. The discovery in Egypt of fragments of the Gospel, which have been dated from the first half of the second century, requires the writing of the Gospel within the limits of the first century (Ref. KJV 984).

**Purpose:** John hopes that a conviction will be created in the reader that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that life will come through faith in Him (John 20:30-31).

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### INTRODUCTION:

John 3:5, Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus in a continued dialogue regarding being born again as a requirement to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus is not sure what being born again means. We understand such from Nicodemus question in John 3:4, “Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” Jesus offers Nicodemus a broader explanation of being born again by defining the type of birth. There has to be a water and Spirit birth in order to enter God’s kingdom.

### MESSAGE:

Before you begin, it is important to point out a few facts concerning Nicodemus: (1) Nicodemus is a Pharisee, (2) he is a ruler of the Jews, (3) Nicodemus visits Jesus during the night, (4) he address Jesus as Rabbi (teacher), (5) Nicodemus was not alone in his belief, (6) he recognized Jesus miracles, and (7) Nicodemus knew God was with Jesus. These facts are found in John 3:1-2. Please note that if you are teaching John 3:5 as a series, these points were mentioned in sermon one on John 3:3.

*“Jesus answered, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*

In examining John 3:5, there are two key concepts that will shape your thoughts regarding Nicodemus fate: (1) being born of the water and (2) being born of the Spirit. Each concept has its own exegetical meaning that makes Jesus statement to Nicodemus profound as it relates to cultural intertexture.

The phrase Jesus use in John 3:5 is symbolically different from what he used in John 3:3. Jesus does not want Nicodemus to be *born again*, but simply *born*. Born again (i.e. being born from

above) is not the statement of choice because Jesus perceives that *born again* requires heavenly understanding. Nicodemus response to Jesus in John 3:4 speaks of a second birth. Nicodemus uses the Greek word [*deuteros* meaning *again, second, secondarily*] and not the Greek word [*anōthen* meaning *a new birth or being born from above*]. Therefore, we understand that Nicodemus does not fully understand the spiritual context by which Jesus spoke “be born again”.

Jesus changes his statement to only include the word *born* and not *born again*. In the Greek, [*born - gennaō* is used metaphorically in the writings of Apostle John of the gracious act of God in conferring upon those who believe the nature and disposition of children, imparting to them spiritual life thus meaning *to beget or to be born*]. Jesus essentially is stating to Nicodemus that there is a spiritual life (i.e. spiritual birth, a new birth) that is imparted and required to enter the kingdom of God. This reference to spiritual life requires a new birth and is two fold – water and spirit.

In the Greek, [*water – hudōr* is used symbolically (1) of the word of God as in I Peter 1:23 and (2) the moral and practical cleansing effected by the removal of defilement by our taking heed to the Word of God in heart, life, and habit]. Jesus is expressing to Nicodemus that he must identify with the word of God. Being born of water implies that humanity must accept the word of God. The word of God (Old Testament Prophecy) spoke of His coming and these sayings should have been familiar to Nicodemus. If Nicodemus identifies with being born of water, (i.e. taking heed to the word of God) it will remove the defilement needed for belief.

The water (word of God) also has a cleansing affect - its ability to cleanse and remove

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**MESSAGE CONTINUED...**

defilement. In John 15:3 Jesus states, “**Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.**” Jesus answered Nicodemus, giving him heavenly knowledge. He essentially meant be cleansed and be born of the word of God to enter God’s kingdom.

Now, let’s examine the second phrase – born of the Spirit. In the Greek, *Spirit – pneuma refers to the wind, to breathe, blow, and also breath “the spirit” which like the wind is invisible, immaterial, and powerful.* Jesus is expressing to Nicodemus that he must also be born of God’s Spirit. It is important to note why Nicodemus may not have understood the new birth of water or Spirit.

Greeks sometime used the expression “born again” to describe the birth of a son. The idea was that in the birth of a son, the father started life again because he was reproduced in his son thus giving strength to the term “born again” (Towns 29). Therefore, “born again” would not have meant “new birth” to Nicodemus but rather “second birth” which explains his use of the Greek term *deuteros*.

The method by which the “new birth” takes place is spiritual regeneration. Regeneration means new birth, new beginning, new order as in Matthew 19:28 – “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The assumption that Nicodemus would be familiar with spiritual regeneration is based on Old Testament passages as in Ezekiel 36:26-28 – “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do

them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” Ultimately, Jesus telling Nicodemus to be born of water (word of God) and Spirit (God’s Spirit) refers to a new birth a spiritual regeneration to enter the kingdom of God not a second birth as tradition has taught.

Once again, Jesus changes his statement to Nicodemus from see the kingdom of God to enter the kingdom of God.

*“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*

It is certainly a defining moment for Christ to use the phrase “see the kingdom of God”. Because Nicodemus refers to the miracles of Jesus, which insure that there is some level of physical sight (not spiritual sight), Christ had to move beyond the Greek term *blepō*.

Enter the kingdom of God implies something different altogether. In the Greek, [*eisodos means the present access of believers into God’s presence, for entrance into, and their entrance into Christ’s eternal kingdom*]. Jesus let’s Nicodemus know that the new birth - spiritual birth will grant him access to God and Christ eternal kingdom if he becomes born of water and Spirit.

**MESSAGE CONTINUED....**

**MESSAGE POINTS:**

1. Jesus changed his communication to accommodate Nicodemus spiritual level.
2. Tradition can get in the way of revelation. Nicodemus by tradition could identify with a natural birth, but not a spiritual birth.
3. Jesus will continue to communicate waiting on your full understanding.
4. Embrace the cleansing by the word of God.
5. Welcome the Spirit of God by knowing the word of God.
6. Don't let tradition keep you from fully embracing the word of God.

**MESSAGE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

**MESSAGE NOTES:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

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## TITLE: WATER BIRTH

### Concluding Thoughts

John 3:5 compel the reader to experience a new birth. Being born of the water and Spirit implies something deeper than what most people will think – water baptism. Jesus is essentially telling all believers through John’s account, you must be born of the word of God. Being born of the word of God is the first step to knowing His Spirit, which also requires a birth.

John is a very descriptive writer. He takes the reader through this cultural intertexture that guides us through the heart of Nicodemus the Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. We leave this discourse hoping for a silent turn in Nicodemus life that will change the very nature of his tradition.

Jesus makes it very clear that there are requirements to see and enter the kingdom of God. We can only hope that the readers heed those requirements thus being born again and experiencing the new birth.



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*Sermons for Pastors and  
Leaders of the Christian  
faith!*

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*The scripture and above material has been taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible and Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. The opinions of this sermon are from Dr. Evette Hyder-Davis and should be researched further by the recipient. Rightly Dividing sermon series is a copyright of Dr. Evette Hyder-Davis with permission for use but not distribution.*

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