

The New Birth that Jesus Brings

Moms, Tots, and Beyond / October 11, 2018

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

--Ezekiel 36:25-27

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”

--II Corinthians 5:17

Background/Key Terms

Nicodemus: a rabbi/distinguished teacher of Jews, a religious, law-abiding man, excellent Jewish “credentials”; would have assumed that, by virtue of being Jewish, he would be admitted to God’s kingdom; 2-3 years later, he defends Jesus among his colleagues in the Sanhedrin, and he prepares Jesus’ body for burial

Pharisees: a member of an ancient Jewish sect, distinguished by strict observance of the traditional and written law, and commonly held to have pretensions to superior sanctity

Kingdom of God: reign of Christ in both the present and future sense, an experience of eternal, resurrection life that includes peace, prosperity, and justice

Born in water and spirit: not referring to water baptism, but hearkens back to promise of cleansing, new hearts, and a full measure of the Spirit in Ezekiel; water is additionally linked to the cleansing work of God’s Word, with the Spirit as an active agent in renewing hearts

Son of Man: Jesus’ favorite way of speaking of Himself; has a double meaning of underscoring his humanity but also His exalted heavenly role in the history of redemption, referring to Daniel 7

Snake on pole: In Numbers 21:4-9, God sent venomous snakes to discipline the Israelites for complaining against Him. They repented, Moses prayed, and God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. If the people looked at the bronze snake (with belief), they were healed from their snakebites. Foreshadows Jesus being lifted up on the cross, but as more than the snake: He is both the source *and* means of healing.

Study of John 2:23-25 and 3:1-21

1) What do you notice about the interaction between Jesus and Nicodemus? (What does Nicodemus seem to be seeking? How does Jesus approach the conversation? What is His method for beginning to work change in Nicodemus? What is the “movement” or “flow” in their exchange? Which moments are surprising or intriguing for you?)

2) What do we learn through this passage about new birth and life?

3) Application/Personal Connection

- In what ways can you see yourself in the person of Nicodemus?
 - A desire to ask Jesus, “Who are you, really?”
 - A tendency to approach Jesus under the cover of darkness, when others can’t watch you
 - A temptation to rely on your achievements and status rather than recognizing your need for an entirely new birth in Him
 - Someone who has been transformed over time by God’s Spirit
- What aspects of regeneration/new birth/new life might God be calling your attention to today? Why does this truth matter in your life?
- In this season of your life, how might Jesus be calling you more deeply into belief in Him?
- How does God seem to have been producing “signs of life” in you, by His grace? Think of the new godly desires, longings, and appetites that He is developing in you as you partake of His divine nature. Are there parts of your life where you long for Him to make things new?