

# “The Gospel of John: We Don’t Know”

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## Scripture

### John 3:1-8

“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 have come from God** as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4Nicodemus said to Him, "**How can a man be born when he is old?** He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8"**The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going;** so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

## Overview of the Gospels

- **Matthew** -> **Jewish flavor to the writing, portraying Jesus as the Christ and King**
- **Mark** -> **Jesus as the “Son of Man”, really Peter’s Gospel for the Gentiles**
- **Luke** -> **Jesus is Human and the Redeemer of Humanity**
- **John** -> **Jesus is the Divine “Son of God”**

## Why Write the Gospel?

Matthew, Mark and Luke’s Gospels were already around. Why another one?

## The Purpose for John’s Gospel

### John 20:30-31

“Therefore, **many other signs Jesus also performed** in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** you may have life in His name.”

Many events in John not recorded elsewhere

Many events recorded in the Synoptics not in John -> the Transfiguration, for example

The word “believe” ~100 times in John’s Gospel

## Review John 1 and John 2

### John 1: The Court Case

Statement: Jesus is God, He is Eternal, He is the Creator, He is the misunderstood Light (v.1-5)

John the Baptist, the First Witness -> A witness to the Light of the World (v.6-8)

Jesus was rejected by mankind (v.11)

The Light became flesh and walked among us (v. 14)

Jesus is Grace and Truth and came to explain God the Father to us (v.17-18)

He is the divine Lamb of God and the Son of God (v.29-34)

He showed His divinity in calling the disciples, especially Nathanael (I saw you) (v.35-51)

### John 2: The Evidence Begins

The First Sign: Water into Wine at Cana (v.2-11) -> "He can change physical materials"

The First Cleansing of the Temple (v.13-22) -> "He has the Father's divine authority"

Jesus Knows what is in men (v.23-25) -> "He has divine knowledge"

### Today's message: We Don't Know

#### John 3:1-2

"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 have come from God** as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover – John 2:23

Nicodemus – **we'll talk about him more next week**

"a ruler of the Jews" -> Pharisees governed in the 71-member "the supreme court" or the Sanhedrin

Pharisee meant "the separated ones" -> promoted themselves as separated from the commoners

"came to Jesus by night" - He had position as a Pharisee – didn't want his crew to know he went?

"We know that You have come from God" -> **timeline in John** – other gospels more chronological?

"As a teacher" -> did not recognize Jesus as God or the Messiah but only as a teacher

Nicodemus recognized himself as a teacher, too -> we know you're like "we are"

"No one can do these signs that you do unless God is with them" -> **Just the wedding at Cana?**

Many miracles (signs) had been done by this time -> John only recorded one, so far

## Born Again?

### John 3:3

"Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, **he cannot see** the kingdom of God."

**Jesus takes control of the conversation right away** -> **He know the hearts of men** (from John 2)

"Born again" literally meaning born from above – a heavenly birth – a spiritual birth

Nicodemus may be thinking that he's good as he is -> follow the commandments and you get into the kingdom

This is **very similar** to the Rich Young Ruler interaction (Matthew 19:16-30)

**Is Nicodemus coming for his personal knowledge or to gain info for his ruling group?**

"he cannot see" – Greek for "see" meaning "to perceive in one's mind" signifying an understanding

"the kingdom of God" -> 1) could be the coming 1000 year millennial kingdom or 2) a spiritual kingdom

Jesus said, "my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36)

### 1 Corinthians 2:14

"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."

**Key point:** **Unless a man has spiritual eyes, he cannot "see" or understand spiritual things...**

Jesus: "When He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8)

### John 3:4-5

"Nicodemus said to Him, "**How can a man be born when he is old?** He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit **he cannot enter** into the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus is taken back a good bit because of the statement by Jesus

"How can a man be born when he is old?"

What do you think? -> Is Nicodemus an idiot or not?

He is a teacher – to get that position in Jerusalem, you had to have some clue.

He is extending Jesus's figurative language

What is he really asking? "You mean, I have to start over in my understanding of the kingdom of God?"

Nicodemus might say: "I've spent my whole life understanding this, studying this, praying about this, teaching this to others. I'm respected, sought out by others for my insight, called to lead Bible studies at my church!"

You cannot be serious!

"unless one is born of water and the Spirit" -> water reflected a spiritual cleansing

- 1) This is not baptism in water
  - 2) This is not an earthly birth via water in the womb
- This is being spiritually cleansed

**John 13:5-10** (in the upper room – Jesus becomes like a slave)

"Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So, He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "**Lord, do You wash my feet?**"

7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."

8 Peter said to Him, "**Never shall You wash my feet!**"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, **but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.**"

It was a need for spiritual cleansing not a full shower...

This showed up **in the Old Testament** -> could be that Nicodemus would have known these verses

**Isaiah 44:1-5**

"But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus says **the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb**, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

3 **For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants;** and they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.' "This one will say, 'I am the LORD'S; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to the LORD,' And will name Israel's name with honor."

Isaiah's message from God was the same: **water of cleansing and His Spirit and blessing**

"He cannot enter" -> having the Holy Spirit is the "passport" to the kingdom of God

### John 3:6

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Jesus gives Nicodemus the straight message:

-> there's the flesh trying to follow the commandments in your own power

-> then there's the Spirit moving into the flesh and changing your heart

### Jeremiah 31:31-34

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel** and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

33"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "**I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**" They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' **for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,**" declares the LORD, "for **I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**"

### Ezekiel 11:19-20

"I will give them one heart and **put a new spirit within them.** And **I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,** that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God."

### Ezekiel 36:25-27

"Then **I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness** and from all your idols. "Moreover, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;** and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

We see the water of cleansing and the new Spirit

**The Old Testament promised it -> Jesus tells Nicodemus that is the way into the Kingdom**

**John 3:6 -> "Do not be amazed** that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

"Do not be amazed" -> Nicodemus's jaw had to have dropped, a visible sign of bewilderment

## The Wind Vane

8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

We learned a lot about wind during the fires here in Nebraska

Do we have the ability to control the wind?

The Wind Vane shows the direction that the wind is blowing -> we need these to understand wind direction

What about a spiritual wind vane?

We simply do not know when and where the Spirit will move.

We do not know who He will touch and when -> Sean -> Jerry

Jesus says that the Spirit will act upon whom He pleases when He pleases according to God's divine plan

We interpret what we see as we are constantly aware of signs of His moving -> we need to be on the lookout

## Calvinism and TULIP

In short, Calvinism holds that **Salvation is a God-controlled event** -> **God is Sovereign**

T	-> Total Depravity	We are born sinners without hope
U	-> Unconditional Election	If God has chosen us, then we will be His (Romans 8:31)
L	-> Limited Atonement	Hell will be occupied – God will not save every person
I	-> Irresistible Grace	"All that the Father has given Me will come to Me" (John 6:37)
P	-> Perseverance of the Saints	You cannot lose salvation if you've been saved

## Romans 8:28-39

"We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and **these whom He predestined, He also called**; and **these whom He called, He also justified**; and **these whom He justified, He also glorified**.

31 What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. **Who will separate us from the love of Christ?** Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

37But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **will be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In Romans, Paul clearly summarized that God controls salvation – from the beginning to the very end of life

### The Spirit's Role

He is the down payment or pledge to get into Heaven -> **the passport into Eternity**

### 2 Corinthians 2:21-22

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and **gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.**”

He is the teacher inside, reminding you all that Jesus said

### John 14:26

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.**”

He is the Comforter and the Companion -> paraclete

### John 14:16

“**I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

### We Don't Know

The last message in John 2 taught that Jesus knew what was in the heart of man

Today's message is that salvation is a work of the Spirit – **We do not know who will be saved**

While Jesus knows, we do not.

The thief on the cross was moved by the Spirit in the last hours of his life

We are saved by the grace of God as a gift

### Ephesians 2:8-9

“For **by grace you have been saved** through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; **not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast.”

### Communion – Prayer - Benediction