

Bible Study – March 17, 2015 (John 2: 23 – 3: 21)

1. How do you understand Nicodemus as a person? Discuss his strength and weakness? (3: 1, 2 [19], 4, 9, 12; 7: 50; 19: 39)
 - a. A ruler and a teacher (3: 1, 10)
 - b. A person who thinks that he knows many things (3: 2)
 - c. A person who would like to know the truth (seeker of truth) but not at the loss of his good public image (3: 2)
 - d. A person who tried to know Jesus with his knowledge but given his heart to Jesus in course of time
 - e. A person who accepted the counsel of Jesus and went through the changes over the period of time. Even though he was timid at the beginning, he came right out for Jesus at the end as he accepted and understood him more and more.
2. How do Jesus understand Nicodemus as a person? (2: 23, 24, 25; 3: 3, 6, 10)
 - a. Someone who cannot be trusted full (in the beginning) 2: 24
 - b. Someone who is in need of a new beginning despite of his knowledge and reputation (3: 1 – 3)
 - c. A person who fall short of spiritual standard/level (3: 6)
 - d. Ignorant despite of being knowledgeable (3: 9)
 - e. Need to grow to a great extent to understand the preliminary things about **born again**. (3: 12)
3. How do you understand the concept **born again**? (3: 3, 5, 6, 7, 8; 1: 13; Ez. 36: 25 – 27; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Gal. 6: 15; Titus 3: 5) How and when does the process of born again will come into effect? (3: 13 – 15 cf. v. 9)

The term can either mean born again or born from above. Another equivalent term is found in Johannine writings is **born of God** (John 1: 13; 1 John 2: 29; 3: 7 – 10; 4: 7; 5: 4). Jesus is addressing to a Jewish ruler and a teacher of the law. Jesus is addressing purely in Jewish terms. The Water-Spirit combination is a reflection of Ezekiel 11, 36, and Jeremiah 31. These passages talks about cleansing of human hearts with water and their inner transformation by his Spirit for a new beginning.

Therefore, the term **born again** portraits the picture of a person who is cleansed and filled by the Spirit by God to become a new creation. This is an experience and a new beginning. By undergoing this process he has cut off from the family of sin to the family of God.

Gal 4: 29: - Isaac born according to the Spirit to bring God's plan into fulfilment. The birth of Isaac was completely at the fullness of God's timing. He was born in a time when both his parents lost their ability to give birth to a child. It was by the grace of God and for the purpose of God.
4. What are the qualifications to enter or to see the kingdom of God? (3: 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16; Matt. 3: 2)

- a. Cannot see or enter the kingdom of God with knowledge but with an experience (3: 2, 3). As an outside matter cannot understand neither the origin nor the destination of the Wind, a person who is not born again cannot understand the born again experience.
 - b. Readiness or submissiveness to have a new beginning (3: 5). Nicodemus might be righteous according to Jewish society. He might had a lot of knowledge. But no one can enter the kingdom of God with his own strength or righteousness. Everyone need a new beginning.
 - c. Readiness to be filled by the Spirit and accepts its authority (3: 6, 8)
 - d. Great-heartedness to accept and believe the preliminary and heavenly things (3: 12). {Earthly things: - Jesus Christ came down from heaven. People need to believe in him and accept him for a new beginning. These things takes place on earth. Jesus was talking about this until now and Nicodemus couldn't understand it. Then, there is a heavenly part to it, more advanced truths. Nicodemus won't be able to get it unless he will be able to understand the earthly things}
 - e. Believe in Jesus Christ (3: 15)
5. Nicodemus came to Jesus with intellectual questions (3: 2, 4, 9)? Jesus began answering to his question in a preliminary intellectual level and he couldn't grasp it (3: 12). Therefore, in verse 16 – 18 author summarises the conversation by bringing it to the level of faith and love. How do you understand the transition from intellect [knowledge] to faith and love [heart] in the process of born again? Does the first sign in chapter 2 has any relevance in this discussion?
- A person comes to the **born again** experience as the result of faith in Jesus Christ and God's love and not because of his intellectual capacity. The experience of **born again** is more than intellectual agreement that Jesus is God. It means putting our trust and confidence in him that he alone can save us.
6. How do you understand God's Love? (3: 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21; 14: 21; Eph. 3: 17 – 19; 1 John 3: 16, 17, 18, 19). In these verses Jesus Christ is described as the only begotten Son (3: 16) and as the Light (3: 19, 20, 21). These title of Jesus has connected to the theme of God's Love.
- God's love is not static or self centered. It reaches out and draws others in.
 God's love is always followed by action.
 It is decisive. Either eternal life or judgment
 How do we receive God's love will decide our destiny. God's love will increase our confidence level.
- Wind's Origin: - Eccl. 8: 8; 11: 5. Though the wind's origin is invisible. Its effect can be observed.
- Moses' lifting up of serpent: - Num 21: 8 - 9