

Regeneration: A Change in the Origin of Birth

Through his conversations with Jesus, Nicodemus, a teacher of the Law and member of the Sanhedrin, recognizes that Jesus is with God and is an exceptional teacher. He is trying to understand what regeneration is and is chastened for not knowing as a teacher of the Law.

There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to him at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs you do unless God were with him."

Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"How can anyone be **born** when he is old?" Nicodemus asked him. "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be **born**?"

Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is **born** of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is **born** of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is **born** of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be **born** again. The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone **born** of the Spirit."

"How can these things be?" asked Nicodemus.

"Are you a teacher of Israel and don't know these things?" Jesus replied. (John 3:1-10, CSB)

1. When you read the above account with Nicodemus, what do you observe of Jesus' use of the word "born?" Is Jesus speaking literally or figuratively? Is Nicodemus speaking literally or figuratively?

2. Nicodemus was chastened for not knowing about the New Covenant. In revealing the New Covenant, the prophet Ezekiel speaks of one of its benefits. What do you observe? Is Ezekiel speaking literally or figuratively?

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances. (Ezek 36:26-27, CSB)

3. When Jesus speaks of the Spirit, what additional information do you learn?

Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. The one who doesn't love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

"I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. (John 14:23-26, CSB)

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Teacher Notes

Through his conversations with Jesus, Nicodemus, a teacher of the Law and member of the Sanhedrin, recognizes that Jesus is with God and is an exceptional teacher. He is trying to understand what regeneration is and is chastened for not knowing as a teacher of the Law.

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"Are you a teacher of Israel and don't know these things?" Jesus replied. (John 3:1-10, CSB)

Inform the student that the English translation of regeneration arises from two Greek words. One of the Greek words means "born" or "birth." The bold words show you where the Greek word is used.

1. When you read the above account with Nicodemus, what do you observe of Jesus' use of the word "born?" Is Jesus speaking literally or figuratively? Is Nicodemus speaking literally or figuratively?

Ask the student: is Nicodemus using the word "born" literally or figuratively when he asks, "how can anyone be born when he is old, can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?"

Nicodemus is speaking literally!

Ask the student: when Jesus speaks of being "born again, born of water, born of the Spirit," is He speaking literally or figuratively?

Jesus is speaking figuratively. If the student is unsure, help him understand what figurative speech is.

Ask the student: what is Jesus telling Nicodemus about being "born again?" What do you observe in the passage? Allow some time for discussion.

When Jesus speaks of being "born again," He is alluding to the sinful spiritual condition of human beings; "born again" is about receiving a new origin / new condition. Jesus is teaching Nicodemus that regeneration is receiving a new origin: "whatever is **born of the flesh** is flesh, and whatever is **born of the Spirit** is spirit."

2. Nicodemus was chastened for not knowing about the New Covenant. In revealing the New Covenant, the prophet Ezekiel speaks of one of its benefits. What do you observe? Is Ezekiel speaking literally or figuratively?

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances. (Ezek 36:26-27, CSB)

Ask the student: how is Jesus associated with the New Covenant? If the student is unaware of the New Covenant, take a moment to teach what it is.

When the nation of Israel irrevocably broke the Mosaic Covenant, God made a New Covenant. The birth of Jesus introduced the New Covenant and His death / resurrection activated it.

When someone believes in and trusts Jesus Christ, then God is bound to the conditions of the New Covenant.

Ask the student: what do you observe of Ezekiel's prophecy of the New Covenant? How would you answer Nicodemus' question, "how can anyone be born when he is old?"

God will give the Believer a new heart and new spirit.

3. When Jesus speaks of the Spirit, what additional information do you learn?

Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. The one who doesn't love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

"I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. (John 14:23-26, CSB)

Ask the student: carefully observe what Jesus says. Who will keep / obey Jesus' word?

Those who love Jesus Christ.

Ask the student: who will God love?

Those who love Jesus Christ.

Ask the student: who will God and His Son Jesus Christ make a home in?

Those who love Jesus Christ.

Ask the student: what will the Holy Spirit do once God places Him, a new Spirit, in the Believer?

The Holy Spirit will teach us all things and remind us of everything Jesus Christ told us.

Regeneration is being "born again" and receiving a new origin, which includes a new heart and spirit. Believers are passive recipients of the Holy Spirit who helps us learn more about how to be holy as God is holy.