“You Must Be Born Again” – John 3:1-15 (Part 1)

1. The Lost Condition of Nicodemus (vv.1-2)
   1. Religion is insufficient (v.1)
      1. Nicodemus was a Pharisee
      2. Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin
   2. Affirmation of the supernatural in Jesus is inadequate (v.2)
      1. He affirms that Jesus is a Rabbi, a teacher
      2. He affirms that Jesus has been commissioned by God
      3. He affirms that God is empowering Jesus ministry (e.g. Ex. 3:12; Jer. 1:19)
   3. Spiritual darkness is the main problem (v.2 – “by night”; cf. 3:19-20)

*“Doubtless Nicodemus approached Jesus at night, but his own ‘night’ was blacker than he knew.” (Carson)*

1. New Life in Jesus by the Spirit is Mankind’s Greatest Need (vv.3-6)
   1. Jesus declares the impossibility of experiencing the Kingdom apart from a new birth (v.3)
      1. What is the Kingdom?
         1. The Kingdom of God is the saving reign/rule of God through His Messiah.
         2. *“To see the kingdom of God was to participate in the kingdom at the end of the age, to experience eternal, resurrection life.” (Carson)*
         3. The Jews expected to all enter the Kingdom (cf. Ezk. 33:24)

“*All Israel has a share in the world to come. As it reads [Is. IX. 21]: "And thy people-they will all be righteous, for ever shall they possess the land, the sprout of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may glorify myself." The following have no share in the world to come: He who says that there is no allusion in the Torah concerning resurrection, and he who says that the Torah was not given by Heaven.” (Sanhedrin 11:1).*

* + 1. What is it to be born “ἄνωθεν” (again/from above)?
       1. “Again” (i.e. a second time; cf. 3:4)
       2. “From Above” (i.e. from God; cf. 3:31; 19:11)
  1. Nicodemus exposes his spiritual blindness by his misunderstanding (v.4; cf. 1 Cor. 2:14)
  2. Jesus declares the impossibility of entering the Kingdom apart from a total spiritual transformation of an individual (vv.5-6)
     1. What does “born from water and spirit” *not* mean?

Option 1: Water refers to physical birth.

Option 2: Water refers to Christian baptism.

* + 1. What does it mean?
       1. Clues
          1. This entire expression is parallel to “born from above” in v.3.
          2. Jesus expected Nicodemus to understand what he is talking about since he is a teacher of the *Old Testament*! So, we ought to look there for our answer (cf. Ezk. 36:24-28)
       2. To be born from above involves:
          1. Born of Water – An entire cleansing of the heart from the pollution and guilt of sin (Ezk. 36:24; cf. Jer. 33:8)
          2. Born of Spirit – An entire transformation of the heart by God’s Spirit (Ezk. 36:25-26)

*“If he was like some other Pharisees, he was too confident of the quality of his own obedience to think he needed much repentance (cf. Lk. 7:30), let alone to have his whole life cleansed and his heart transformed, to be born again.” (Carson)*

* + 1. Why must this happen? (3:6)
       1. The flesh cannot produce spiritual life.
       2. The Spirit creates spiritual life (i.e. v.5), which is fit for heaven.