

THE Gospel Part 6 – Born from Above (not-“again”) In The Resurrection – Study Guide

This study guide focuses on the profound dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3. It emphasizes the necessity of scriptural context, the correct translation of "born from above", and the intrinsic link between the "new birth" and the national resurrection of Israel as prophesied in the Hebrew scriptures.

Definitions of Key Words

- **Anothen:** The Greek word often mistranslated as "again"; it is an **adverb of place** meaning "**from above**".
- **Context:** The divine order and setting of words that determine their true meaning; to ignore or change it is described as a "crime" against the text.
- **Born From Above:** A future event referring to the **resurrection of the redeemed** into the coming earthly kingdom.
- **Milk of the Word:** Foundational doctrines, such as the resurrection of the dead, which every teacher of Israel was expected to know (**Hebrews 6**).
- **Earthly Things:** Events that take place on the earth, specifically the opening of graves and the physical resurrection of bodies.
- **Teacher of Israel:** A title for a master of the Hebrew scriptures; in this source, it refers to Nicodemus, who was expected to understand the "milk" of resurrection.

Expansion of Key Points

1. The Critical Nature of Context

The sources state that context is essential to determine the true meaning of scripture and to whom specific sections are addressed. Theological systems often pull verses like **John 3:16** out of context to support traditions, but doing so subverts the divine order of the word. Understanding John 3 requires looking back at the end of John 2, which establishes a context of the **Passover of the Jews**, the **temple**, and **Jesus's own resurrection (John 2:13–22)**.

2. Nicodemus: The Expert Audience

Jesus's discourse in John 3 is addressed specifically to Nicodemus, "the teacher of Israel," who represented the **top theological leadership** of the redeemed Jews. As an expert in the Hebrew scriptures, Nicodemus should have understood the "milk" of the word—basic truths about the resurrection—yet he struggled to grasp them. This conversation was not for the general world but was a specific discussion regarding the **resurrection of the house of Israel**.

3. Born "From Above" vs. "Again"

A primary point of the source is that "born again" is an incorrect translation of the Greek word *anōthen*. While translators treated it as an adverb of time ("again"), it is consistently used elsewhere as an **adverb of place** ("from above"). Jesus was not speaking about a present-day spiritual experience but a **future event in a specific place**: the coming earthly kingdom.

4. The Ezekiel 36 and 37 Connection

Jesus expected Nicodemus to understand being "born of water and spirit" (**John 3:5**) because these terms are used together in the Hebrew scriptures regarding the **resurrection of Israel**. Specifically, **Ezekiel 36:25–27** speaks of God sprinkling clean water on Israel and putting a "new spirit" within them. Furthermore, **Ezekiel 37:1–14** provides the "remoter context" of dry bones coming to life, graves being opened, and the spirit being put into the people so they may live in their own land.

5. Resurrection as an "Earthly Thing"

Jesus categorized the resurrection as an "earthly thing" rather than a heavenly one (**John 3:12**). This is because resurrection involves the **opening of physical graves on the earth** to bring the dead back to life. Additionally, Jesus clarifies in **John 3:13** that "no one has ascended into heaven," confirming that the dead remain in the dust awaiting this earthly resurrection.

6. The Target of John 3:16

In the context of the conversation with the "teacher of Israel" and the references to Ezekiel, **John 3:16** refers to the **redeemed of Israel**. The "world" God loved in this specific context was the world of His own people who were promised resurrection and inheritance in the coming earthly kingdom.

Biblical References Within The Source Excerpts

- **John 2:13–22:** The Passover of the Jews; Jesus speaking of the temple of His body and resurrection.
- **John 3:1–15:** The dialogue with Nicodemus regarding being born from above, water, and spirit.
- **John 3:16:** God's love for the world (the redeemed of Israel).
- **John 18:20:** Jesus defining His "world" as the synagogues and temple.
- **John 21:13:** Part of the wider context of the Passover.
- **Ezekiel 36:22–38:** God's promise to sprinkle clean water and put a new spirit in Israel.
- **Ezekiel 37:1–28:** The vision of the dry bones, the opening of graves, and the restoration of the two kingdoms into one.
- **Hebrews 6:** Defining the resurrection of the dead as the "milk of the word".
- **Daniel 12:2:** The resurrection of the dead who sleep in the dust.
- **Revelation 20:5:** The rest of the dead not being dealt with until later.

Study Questions

- **Translation Accuracy:** Why do the sources claim that "born again" is an incorrect translation of the Greek word *anōthen*?
- **Contextual Clues:** List three key words or phrases from **John 2** that establish the context for Jesus's conversation in **John 3**.
- **The Ezekiel Link:** According to the sources, why should Nicodemus have known about being "born of water and spirit"?
- **Resurrection Category:** Why does Jesus call the resurrection an "earthly thing" in **John 3:12**?
- **Status of the Dead:** According to **John 3:13** and **Daniel 12:2**, where are the dead currently located, and why is this significant for the doctrine of resurrection?

Answer Key

- *Anōthen* is an **adverb of place** meaning "from above," whereas "again" is an adverb of time; Jesus was referring to the location of the coming kingdom, not the timing of a spiritual experience.

- The **Jews**, the **temple**, and the **resurrection** (raising the body in three days).
- Because these terms are used together in **Ezekiel 36 and 37** to describe the future cleansing and national resurrection of Israel, which Nicodemus was expected to have mastered.
- Because it involves the physical opening of **graves on the earth** and the restoration of life to bodies in the dust.
- They are **asleep in the dust**, not in heaven; this is significant because if they were already in heaven, there would be no need for a resurrection or the opening of graves.

Exhortations

- **Respect the Context:** Do not be a "criminal" against the scriptures by pulling verses out of their divine setting to prop up traditions; let the **context** determine the meaning.
- **Master the Milk:** Do not try to move on to "steak" if you do not yet understand the **foundational milk** of the resurrection as established in the Hebrew scriptures.
- **Fix Your Eyes on the Kingdom:** Stop focusing on "time" (the now) like Nicodemus did; fix your focus on **place**—the future earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ.
- **Be Willing to Change:** When you see that a long-held tradition (like "born again") contradicts the plain teaching of Jesus, have the **humility to change** your heart and your teaching.