

John 3:1-8:

theme: **For a Christian, to be born of the Spirit**

- 1. Is necessary**
- 2. Is radical**

1.) John 2:13-22: Passover feast.
2:17, 22: focus still on the disciples. 2:23-25: focus now shifts to the people.
Many believed. But He knew the people. Vs. 24-25
John 3: Nicodemus one of those people. Wanted to have discussion with him.
Pharisees here not necessarily negative. Eager to be busy with God's law
Jesus gives them as example in 5:20.

Jesus' response: Amen, Amen. (Most assuredly). Jesus speaks with authority.
Opening statement: vs. 3: Need to be born again.
Nicodemus confused: did not expect this answer.
Being born again: born from above. Not just making a new start. Born from God.

Vs. 5: born of water and Spirit. See 1:33 : preaching of John.
Water: cleansing. Important symbol for Jews.
Water also: baptism of John: repentance: dying of old nature.
Matthew 3:7-11
Water and Spirit, see Matt. 3:11: they have heard this before, from John.
Also from OT. See Ezekiel 36:25-27:
Born of the Spirit: must come from God. We cannot do it ourselves.

2.) Vs. 6: contrast between flesh and spirit.
1 Corinthians 15:44
Flesh: mortal, earthly, subject to time. Spiritual: eternal.
Pharisees, theologians, probably knew this distinction.
Spirit: comes from God, Who will make all things new.
Often preached by the prophets in the OT. Ezek. 36:25-27, Jeremiah 31:31, Ps. 51

Pharisees: try to educate the people to live godly lives.
Jesus: A totally *new* life is needed, start from the root.
Ezekiel 37: Valley of dead bones. New Life. Only possible through the Spirit.
John 3:16-18: Jesus came to bring life.
Do not marvel: vs. 7: see also vs. 10: this is not new. See the prophets.
Vs. 8: The wind: (Greek: pneuma = wind or spirit).
Being born from above itself cannot be seen,, but we see the results.

Born of the flesh = righteousness by works.
Born of the Spirit = by Grace alone. This is the core of Jesus' teaching.
God's covenant people needs to repent.
Covenant obligation: live BY GRACE ALONE (cleave to, trust, love God)
Live in the joy of faith: rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say: rejoice!
Great theologians were brought to the knowledge of God's Grace by 'simple' people.

Questions:

1. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus was a great scholar and knew just about everything from the Bible. Why then was he confused by what the Lord Jesus said, that we must be born from above (born again)? Could he know what it meant, from the Old Testament?
2. The Greek word for 'born again' is ambiguous and can mean 'born again' as well as 'born from above'. How did Nicodemus interpret these words? And how did the Lord use them? How can you see that from the context?
3. See verse 8: do we know the moment that we are 'born again'? How do we see in our lives that we are 'born again'?
4. What makes that new life (the life born from above) so different from the old life? Or: what is most important in that new life?
5. Looking back on the history of the church: what does that teach us about how easy/difficult it is to live that new life 'by Grace Alone'?
6. What does it mean for you to live by Grace Alone? Can you show practical examples from your life where you can see that?