

NIV

of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit ^a gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You ^b must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ^c ¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. ^d

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, ^e that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. ^f ¹⁹This is the verdict:

^a 6 Or *but spirit* ^b 7 The Greek is plural. ^c 13 Some manuscripts *Man, who is in heaven* ^d 15 Or *believes may have eternal life in him* ^e 16 Or *his only begotten Son*
^f 18 Or *God’s only begotten Son*

THE MESSAGE

the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can’t see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit.

3:7-8 “So don’t be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be ‘born from above’—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it’s headed next. That’s the way it is with everyone ‘born from above’ by the wind of God, the Spirit of God.”

3:9 Nicodemus asked, “What do you mean by this? How does this happen?”

3:10-12 Jesus said, “You’re a respected teacher of Israel and you don’t know these basics? Listen carefully. I’m speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don’t believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can’t see, the things of God?”

3:13-15 “No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

3:16-18 “This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person’s failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

3:19-21 “This is the crisis we’re in: God-light streamed

3:7 You. See NIV text note. This assertion applies to everyone, not just Nicodemus. *must*. There are no exceptions. *born again*. See note on v. 3.

3:14 *the Son of Man must be lifted up*. See notes on 12:31–32.

3:15 *believes*. See note on 1:7. *eternal life*. An infinitely high quality of life in living fellowship with God—both now and forever.

3:16 *God so loved the world*. The great truth that motivated God’s plan of salvation (cf. 1Jn 4:9–10). *world*. All people on earth—or perhaps all creation (see note on 1:9). *gave his one and only Son*. See Isa 9:6. See also 1:14,18; cf. Ge 22:2,16; Ro 8:32. Although believers are also called “sons” of God (2Co 6:18; Gal 4:5–6), Jesus is God’s Son in a unique sense.

3:18 *believes*. . . *does not believe*. John is not speaking of momentary beliefs and doubts but of continuing, settled convictions. *name*. See 2:23 and note.