

Gamma – Gospel of John

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In these few next chapters of John what he is doing is that he is going to look at Jesus with individuals. He will interact with Nicodemus. He will interact with the Samaritan woman. He will interact with the gentile ruler and he will interact with the man at the pool who had some paralysis. There are three areas. So there are three different kinds of people and we can look at the character of the savior when he interacts with each different kind. Today we will see how Jesus interacts with the upper class.

A. WE MUST BE BORN AGAIN:

John 3:1-2 (ESV) Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. **2** This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

So here you have a teacher, a Pharisee, who is basically one of a small sect about 7000 people who are very highly religious, highly educated. They are like the clergy at that time. So it is a Pharisee and not only that he is a ruler of the Jews which means he is a member of parliament, he is member of the Sanhedrin. So he is very highly ranked.

If we look at chapter 1

John 1:9-13 (ESV) The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. **12** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

The true light coming to the world and very funny this fellow comes at night. So it is no accident that John writes this down. When a person comes at night, does he believe or he doesn't believe. Nicodemus means, one who conquers the people. He is an elite member of the Sanhedrin, Jesus recognized him to be a theologian, because Jesus said to him, are you the teacher, not a teacher, which means he must be a professor, so he is highly

educated professor of theology, who is also a member of parliament of the 70 people who are leading the Jews. So this is somebody and then he comes at night.

"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

So he wants to compare notes with Jesus Christ. Jesus replied

John 3:5 (ESV) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God

Jesus word the same word back on him 'unless'. So here you actually have someone who is Nicodemus, who has got the knowledge, experience, understanding, give, social standing and power and yet cannot enter the kingdom of God. So with all his learning, he is coming to Jesus in the middle of night to seek a discussion and Jesus is telling him, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven and then he tells him.

John 3:5-6 (ESV) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:4 (ESV) Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

So they have a discussion about being born again. Now being born again is the most radical way in which you could reorganize somebody's brain. He is coming to Jesus and he is thinking maybe we will have a new theory, maybe he has a new some additional information from a journal that add on to my knowledge, but Jesus is saying, no no you got to start again from kindergarten, you have to start right from the beginning, it is so impossible that you got to be basically born again. So his thinking is physical, Jesus is talking about spiritual.

John 3:7-8 (ESV) Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' **8** The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

So when Jesus is talking about spiritual birth, you cannot see it, you can only feel it. So therefore you can't do it by yourself, only God can do it and it is supernatural. So he is coming to Jesus Christ with all his qualifications, if anybody could do it, it is him. So you go to the church and say, if anybody who could be saved in this church is the pastor or the priest or the pope. Imagine the pope goes to see Jesus and Jesus tell him, you got to be born again, means all the years spent in learning, all the years spent in prayer, everything wasted, you cannot do it on your own, only God can do it. You got to change your nature.

How could you persuade a lion to eat salad rather than meat. It is exactly the same, Jesus is saying that you got to be born again into a new nature. A little boy will definitely pick a chocolate muffin over an apple. It is the nature; it is an actual change in nature. All of us by nature will use God rather than serve God. When we first come to know Jesus Christ, my whole idea was to use God, not serve God and if you look in the church today, many churches they are focused on you using God and if God doesn't serve your purposes then you jettison God. You only go part of the way and he doesn't play ball with you, he doesn't agree with you then you jettison him away. Natural human behavior uses God; it doesn't serve God. So the new birth divides. The poor recognize their poverty, their flaws, they don't mind being born again, you know why, there are no class anyway. They got zero class, they are so poor, born again actually means restarting their lives. Nicodemus, he goes and rejects God, they have got everything going for themselves. It goes against all their achievements. They don't like to retransform themselves.

Karl Marx said, "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusion about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions.

So what he is saying that religion is the opium of people, it gives you illusions just like David Copperfield. Giving illusions and you are obsessed with illusions and if you focus on that then you forget about real life. In this sense, religion even Christianity is exactly like that. I was catholic much of my life, being born in the catholic family. I was an opium addict as it were, I believed I would be saved. They told me if I go to church every Sunday I will be saved. A lot of people have religion like me, so therefore Karl Marx is right. It is an illusion and opium addict will ultimately die if it is not true. So all religions are some way in which we are all trying to live in an illusion to reach God, but the whole idea is that Jesus saying, God comes into your life. When you are born again, you can't choose, God chooses and if God chooses means there is no hopeless case.

If you believe that born again is a sovereign action of God that means, there is nobody who is hopeless that is number 1. Number 2, you always incredibly amaze by grace because God choose you. Of all people he will choose you, so you actually aren't very stuck up, you think you deserved to be saved, so you are constantly amaze and God's grace being shown to you and thirdly, you are forgiving. If God can forgive a guy like you, you will surely forgive everybody else. So you should be forgiving them. These are characteristics of someone who is basically born again.

What it means to be born again?

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God

This is a little bit difficult. Now this fellow is a theologian, now if he is a theologian which means he is 'The Theologian' he would understand what Jesus is talking about. There is only one place in scripture where spirit and water come together and this is in Ezekiel

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (ESV) I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. **26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

So here you have water cleansing and the spirit coming in. So when you mention you can be born again by the spirit and water, immediately Nicodemus would have known this passage. If we look at the context in Ezekiel 37, God brought Ezekiel and showed him a vision, vision is a whole valley made of dry bones.

Ezekiel 37:9-10 (ESV) Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." **10** So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

It looks like impossible, so being born again by water and the spirit is an impossible task that only God can do, by cleansing you from the sin and also putting the spirit inside you. So you can't do it on your own.

B. HOW AM I TO BE BORN AGAIN?

So it is something sovereign and only God can do, you can't do it. So Jesus said,

John 3:14-15 (ESV) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Jesus was talking about being born again and he changed and talk about snake. In the wilderness of Exodus when the people of God are actually going through a difficult time, when they escape and became a nation in the Sinai desert, just before they were brought to the Promise Land, they are here for about 40 years. Now during these 40 years, they grumbled against God, they lost faith in God and so therefore God sent snakes. They all come to bite them. Now these bites produce inflammation, pain and a terrible thirst and the thirst was to remind them, sin is like thirst, you want a lot of things but it can't be fulfilled, so they are dying and as a result of them dying, God said to Moses

Numbers 21:8-9 (ESV) And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

So here are people dying, because they were bitten by snakes. Dying of thirst, dying of inflammation, almost dead and Moses says, if the snake bit you the last thing you want to look at it is a snake, because you would be terrified of snake and this is God playing a big fat joke. The one that caused your death and you have to look at it again, so let's look what is the significance of God putting up a bronze snake which had the same features of the very snakes that are killing them.

The first thing, if they are looking it makes them aware of their sin because the sin caused the snake to come. By looking at the sin God makes us confront our own sin, so therefore only if we have awareness of the sin, repentance of your sin can there be true salvation. If you don't want to look at your sin and many people who are evangelist today, what they do is that they compromise, they never talk about sin. They never talk about the illness that causes your death. So if there is no sin, there is no punishment, what for I need Jesus, just wasting time. So now it forces them to look back at the awareness of the sin, the thing that will kill you will actually save you. This snake that actually kills you is the same snake that is going to save you and the last thing as, all you have to do to be saved is to just look at him, you don't have to do anything, which means that the Lord is trying to tell you all you need is to believe, you don't need to work, you don't need to have whole bunch of ABCD obey in order to be saved. This is the example of grace, just look. So therefore whoever believes in Him may have eternal life. So now the snake is lifted up, Jesus will be lifted up, all you have to do for the snake is to look, all you have to do for the savior is to look and have faith. Can you see the example. So in order to be born again, all we have to do is to look that is the one that is going to save me, the very instrument is actually Jesus Christ.

So this is example of typology where you have the type is the bronze serpent and Jesus crucified is the antitype, the same thing that happens in the New Testament. When John uses the word, lifted up, it is significant that the snake and Jesus are lifted up on the cross, Jesus is lifted up which means which is glorified and exalted that through the cross, there is victory over sin, there is resurrection and there is a glorious event that God's love and commitment to us is seen. Charles Spurgeon was a very great Baptist preacher in London and he tells a story of how he got converted. He had been trying for weeks and months to become a Christian, real Christian, because he couldn't give up his sin, he struggled and one day was winter and he was walking around very dejectedly and it was snowing so badly most of the churches were closed, it happened to wander into this little church and in the church was only plus him eight people. The preacher didn't come on that day, so a lay fellow got up there and could only muster enough guts to preach for 10 minutes and he preached from this verse, look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.

Don't look at your own looks or your own married or your own religion or your own understanding, look to Jesus that's all he said and then after that because eight people in it, he only recognized Spurgeon as a stranger there, boy look to Jesus and Spurgeon looked and at that moment all he knew he had to do is to believe and he believed and came into the Kingdom of God and became the most effective preacher London has ever seen. All he had to do is to look. All these weeks he was just trying so hard to be good, trying so hard to be religious, but all he had to do was look.

DA Carson writes, *"...precisely in the matrix of suffering and exaltation that God most clearly reveals himself in the person of his Son."*

The glorious thing about God is that God suffers to show you his love. So God's grace is behind the serpent, serpent is a means of faith. If you believe by looking at the serpent, the serpent is provided by God's grace, in the same way here is God's grace, provides Jesus and if you look directly at him.

Years later on the Israelites took the serpent out and they started worshipping it and God became very-very upset, because the serpent is actually a means of faith, that means by looking at serpent you are actually looking at God, because it is a means of faith. You cannot worship the serpent and God got very upset, so they have to destroy the serpent because the serpent becomes an idol, different from Jesus Christ. You can actually look at Jesus Christ, Jesus is not a serpent, you can actually worship Jesus directly, why, because Jesus has life in and off himself. He will give you life directly, the serpent cannot give you life directly.

Here you actually have the new birth and the new birth is like a coin. Two sides of the coin. On one hand, you must be born again and the born again process is entirely out of your control, you have no control of it at all and on the other hand you have to look and believe. How can it be entirely God's work and entirely my belief. If you are going to be a Christian today, all God is going to do is move your heart so that you say, well all I have to do is believe in Jesus as Son of God and I give my life to Him, that's all I do. The moment you say that you are born again, but you can never say that unless there is a wind blowing on you. If the wind don't blow on you, you cannot say that. Being born again is a sovereign action of God, the only way you can say. So as far as we look at one part of the coin, you say I believe, on that part of the coin you are born again. That's why being born again is so tricky, people always get it wrong.

[John 3:16 \(ESV\) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.](#)

That means love starts with God and there is no discrimination, salvation is for all without distinction but not all without exception, which means it is open for anybody where fat, thin, ugly man or woman, in-between, does not matter, you can believe in him.

C. BEING BORN AGAIN MEANS THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION

John 3:17-18 (ESV) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

So here now immediately after it says, for God so love the world he gave his son, next passage you talk God condemn and most of us get very upset, because

John 3:36 (ESV) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

The new birth divides those who believe are not condemned, those you reject are condemned. So the problem is how can God talk about for God so love the world and on the other hand God condemned the world. That is a big problem. The problem is because our view of anger is because we are self-absorbed and our ego is revealed. We have a problem, either we believe in a loving God or a wrathful God and the problem is if you believe in either one it is actually distorted reality, it is not true. If you live with a wrathful God, you will always be afraid of God, you will say if I didn't say my prayers, I didn't do my quiet time, we don't know whether lightning strike me today,

The concept of 'a loving God' is actually an alien concept, in those days in the Roman times and the Greek times, there is no such thing as loving God, the gods are all wrathful. If I am bigger than you, I whack you, I take your house. If I have a bigger nation, I will come and take the smaller nation and that's it. There is no such thing as treaty. Right is might. The idea of a loving God actually comes from the Bible. In Christianity within 300 to 600 years the entire culture actually changed. Some people practice nonviolence. Miroslav Wolff, a theologian is from Princeton University, he says *the practice of nonviolence requires a belief in divine vengeance*. He says for the west, *"The thesis: we should not retaliate since God is perfect noncoercive love. Soon you would discover that it takes the quiet of a suburban home for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence corresponds to God's refusal to judge. In a scorched land, soaked in the blood of the innocent, it will invariably die. And as one watches it die, one will do well to reflect about many other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind."*

The liberal minds in the west believe in nonviolence, because they never been to a warzone where your brother is killed and your sister is raped. If you come from that situation you won't talk about nonviolence, you talk about revenge. So this idea of nonviolence only comes in the Western world where there is this distorted idea of God is love only. Now we can only believe in nonviolence if you believe in a God that judges. How else can you believe in nonviolence?

The wrath of God is basically expression of his love of the truth and his expression is love for his people and his creation, the wrath of God is very-very important part of the love of God, because the wrath is there because he loves the truth. Here you actually have the plaintiff versus the defendant. Sitting as a judge when you decide you decide based on the truth and God's anger is like that. It is non-emotional, it is nonreactive, it is settled opposition to evil, it is a natural consequence. If you break the rules, you have to pay the price.

God is not like our world judges, if you do the crime you do the time, so wrath is a consequence of the truth. We are created in the image of God and we have to live according to the image of God. We can get away with sins, but you can never get from your sin. Your sins will find you up one day, there is a natural consequence. It is like walking off the cliff. You walk off the cliff, you fall down, you break your leg, you shake your hands and you curse God. Is it? no because you walk off the cliff. God's wrath is exactly like that. It is like the law of gravity.

Expression of His love for his people His creation

There is a book by Rebecca Pippert, who has got two young people whom she had been bringing up and they become drug addicts and she is very angry at them and she writes,

I feel fury when I am with them, everything in me wanted to shake them, can't you see don't you know what you are doing to yourself, you become less and less of yourself every time I see you. Real love stands against the deception, the lie, the sin that destroys. Anger and love are inseparably bound in the human experience and if I a flawed narcissistic sinful woman can feel this much pain and anger over someone's condition how much more a morally perfect God who made them. Anger isn't the opposite of love, hate is the opposite of love and the final form of hate is indifference

If you see your son or your daughter being a drug addict and you see it Rebecca is saying, every part of the humanity being drained away, every time you see them more drugs take them, more toll takes upon their life, wouldn't you get angry, you wouldn't get angry if it is somebody else's son. That's called indifference, but if it is your own son, anger is a reflection of your love and so God's anger is a reflection of his love.

Jesus laments over Jerusalem

Luke 19:41-44 (ESV) And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, **42** saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. **43** For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side **44** and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.

Matthew 23:37 (ESV) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

So Jesus cries over Jerusalem, because Jerusalem will be destroyed, because he loves them and he sends all the prophets and he kills all their prophets. So here we actually have anger and love mixed in together. So here you actually have, when God's anger is settled opposition to sin. For those who believe in him is not condemned.

Imagine your son broke a window, you only got two kinds of son. He breaks the window; there are two choices for him, cry and run towards the mother or run away. He will be scared of the wrath, the other way is that he runs towards you, because he believes that he is going to get grace. So if we actually believe there is no condemnation, if I sin, I only got two reactions, either I run away from God or I run towards God.

Peter once was fishing and Jesus came and said to him, you have been having a bad time, throw your net over and you catch. He caught all the fish and he suddenly realized Jesus must be some sort of God. His reaction was get away from me; I am a sinful man. Why did he do that? Because he felt condemned because he is trying to gain salvation with his own righteousness. So when you see a holy person, you cannot walk, you stay far away. Then when Jesus died and was resurrected, the next time Jesus came, he did the same thing. Peter was fishing and the same story of catching fish happened. The moment he caught the fish, he realized same trick. Now at this time he runs towards Jesus. Same miracle but two responses. One has seen grace; one has not seen grace. You run towards your mother because you know your mother loves you, that relationship cannot be broken and you come to Christ, you cry because you disappointed your mother and father.

The other one run away as he is scared of punishment. The other one runs towards the father because disappointed the father. When you are saved by Jesus Christ, you run towards God, every time you sin you run towards God because you know he loves you and he has paid for your sin. You don't run away in fear. You don't worry about what other people think, you only worry about God. So the issue here is that Jesus is the one that gives us a clean conscious as it were.

D. HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE BEEN BORN AGAIN?

John 3:19-21 (ESV) And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. **21** But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

So the new birth divides. One comes to light and one rejects the light. The light is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that means Jesus is God. So one person come to the light, one rejects the light. The one who rejects the light does evil deeds, the one who comes to the light does what is right demonstrating God is at work in his life. So how do you know when you are born again? When you do good works because God is at work in your life and how is God is at work in your life, when you believe in Jesus Christ. So therefore you have got faith evidence by works. So you can't say, when I am a Christian, I don't have to be good, you are good because you are a Christian. That's what Jesus is saying, those who come to the light, but whoever does what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God. So therefore his life, all the good works in his life are done because God has done them in him and then he comes to the light, he comes and believes in Jesus Christ. So actually doing good works, charitable works, showing boldness, kindness, all that is a function of coming to the light. When you come to the light it will show that all the good works that you have is because you came to the light. So actually your good works is a function of your belief in the powerful salvaging work of Jesus Christ. So it is not trying hard to be good, that is not how you do it. It is actually being born again and believing. The more you believe, the more likelihood that they allow the light to come in your life and change your life. That's what being born again is.

E. HOW DO WE TELL OTHERS ABOUT BEING BORN AGAIN?

John 3:22-24 (ESV) After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. **23** John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized **24** (for John had not yet been put in prison).

We as Christians are the ones that are totally obsessed by God in our ministry. It is he, ones he comes into our life, Jesus Christ is like a tornado; he is not a gentle wind. Tornado will come, your hairs are all over the place, your life is turned upside down and every day you wake up He must increase and I must decrease.