

# Nicodemus

by C.I. Scofield

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*Man must be born again to receive eternal life and know God, and this is made possible through the lifting up of the Son of Man.*

**Scripture:** Mark 7:21, John 1:4, John 3:1, John 3:3, John 12:24, John 12:32, John 17:3, Romans 6:23, Galatians 3:16, Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 4:11, Colossians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:23, 2 Peter 1:4

**Topics:** "New Birth", "Redemption"

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## Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the profound truths found in John 3:1-15, focusing on Nicodemus as the candid inquirer and the necessity, mystery, and means of the new birth. He emphasizes the outrageous omission of stopping the lesson before verse 16, which he considers the central verse of the Bible. The heart of the lesson lies in the imperatives of being born again and the Son of Man being lifted up, highlighting the essential nature of these actions for fallen humanity's spiritual restoration and redemption.

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## Transcript

(John iii:1-15.)

### I. The Analysis.

1. The Candid Inquirer (verses 1, 2).--Nicodemus has been, not without reason, called "the best natural character in Scripture."

2. The Necessity, Mystery and Means of the New Birth (verses 3-15).

3. The Outrageous Omission. --The august International Lesson Committee not infrequently does foolish things, and as frequently leaves wise things undone; but to stop this lesson short of verse 16 is inexplicable. That verse is the central verse of the Bible, "the Gospel in little," as Luther called it. There certainly is a personal Satan, and in his activity he often beguiles good and well meaning men. He hates John iii:16.

### II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of this lesson lies, I think, in the two imperatives of verses 7 and 14. "Ye **MUST** be born again." "The Son of Man **MUST** be lifted up."

First. The imperative of life--"ye must be born again." There is no going around a divine imperative. The "must's" of God are final. Let us not suppose that they are therefore arbitrary. Not one of the divine imperatives is arbitrary. Something "must" be, not because of a whim of the Sovereign of the universe, but because it could not be otherwise in a moral universe.

The imperative of the new birth is a "must" because of two facts in the being of fallen man. He is spiritually dead, and "must" have life if he is to know and enjoy God (Eph. ii:1; Col. ii:13; Eph. iv:11); and his nature is depraved. It is not to be understood that man by the fall has lost immortality, but only that he is "alienated from the life of God" It is that life which our Lord calls "eternal life"; eternal being a word of quality, not of duration, primarily. Eternal life is imparted by the new birth, and without that life man could not know God (John xvii:3).

The second reason why man "must" be born again is that his human Adamic nature is hopelessly corrupted. It is "flesh." What Christ, who knew what was in man (John ii:25), thought of the old nature may be learned from Mark vii:21-23. By the new birth a new nature is imparted (1 Peter i:23; 2 Peter 1:4).

Equally unavoidable is the second of these divine imperatives, the imperative of death. For man, whom Jesus came to save, was not only "dead," "alienated from the life of God," and incurably corrupt by nature, but he was also personally a guilty violator of the divine law. He was a sinner. He had despised the holy will of God, and was a rebel in a moral universe. A holy God could not ignore the guilt of man, nor make light of it. Something "must" be done to express the divine abhorrence of sin; to express the divine love for the sinner; to liberate the "eternal life" which was in Christ (John i:4), so that it might be imparted to the redeemed (John xii:24); to pay to the broken law of God its inescapable penalty of death (Rom. vi:23; Gal. iii:16, 18), and to draw Godward those who were lost (John xii:32).

And all of this, and who shall say how much more, was wrought by the lifting up of the Son of man.

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