

John 2-3

Doug Olena • Life Together  
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# Outline

- 2 Destroy this temple...
- 3 Nicodemus
- John the Baptist
- 4 Samaritan woman
- The Official's son



Crijn\_Hendricksz



Francesco\_Hayez



Destroy this temple...

John 2:19-25



# Proof of Authority

- ...three days...
- Play on words between "raise" and "erect." Buildings are erected and bodies are raised. (Brant 72)
- "Body as temple" metaphor



Francesco\_Hayez



# Nicodemus & Jesus

John 3:1-21



# Nicodemus & Jesus

- ◆ Nicodemus points out the divine origin of Jesus' work.
- ◆ The origin of anyone's perception of the Kingdom of God is initiated by God.
- ◆ “*anōthen*” (ἀνωθεν) is not a simple word. It is translated “again” or “from above,” but can also be translated “from the origin, beginning, source, of old, or heaven.”



# Nicodemus & Jesus

- ◆ Nicodemus took it to mean “again” and queried Jesus about entering his mother’s womb a second time. He challenged Jesus by taking the absurdist view of rebirth from the mother.
- ◆ “rebirth” metaphor: used in rabbinic Judaism to denote conversion. Nicodemus knew this.



# Nicodemus & Jesus

- ◆ 3:5 One must be born human and born of the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God.
- ◆ So being born from above allows one to both see and enter the kingdom of God.
- ◆ 3:6 Flesh begets flesh, Spirit begets spirit.
- ◆ 3:8 The motivations of a spiritual person are not visible to the earthly eye.
  - ◆ “Wind” metaphor: “pneuma” (πνεῦμα) is the word used for wind and spirit.



“How can this be?”

–*Nicodemus (John 3:9)*



# Four Proofs (Brant 76-79)

- ◆ Nicodemus doesn't accept Jesus' testimony as true.
- ◆ So John offers 4 proofs.
  - ◆ First, Origins: Jesus comes from heaven. (3:12-13)
  - ◆ Second, Analogy: Moses lifted the snake in the wilderness to cure the people of snake bite. (3:14-15)  
Jesus must be lifted up to save people. (Hence the terrible error of the song, **Lift Jesus Higher.**)
    - ◆ read Numbers 21:4-9



# Four Proofs (Brant 76-79)

- ◆ Third, Motive: God's motive is to save people. (3:16-18)
- ◆ Fourth, against the ethos of unbelievers: Believing in Jesus is virtuous.
  - ◆ This is not about accounting for sin, innocence and guilt, or pardon and condemnation. (3:19-21)
  - ◆ These passages in the ancient mind are about honor and shame.
  - ◆ Doing evil is contrasted with living by the truth. And this doesn't mean that those living by the truth don't sin, but that they live fully exposed to the light, to God himself.



# Baptism



<http://www.stvincentferrer.com/religious-education/baptism/>

## Being “Born Again” in the Church

*Church usage of the term varies, but almost universally, the early church took it to mean what occurred at baptism.*



# Being Born Again...

- ◆ Again in John because the word “*anōthen*” (ἀνωθεν) is ambiguous.
- ◆ John 1:9 “light” as metaphor: all people are in some sense born again. Does this gift give the ability to see the kingdom of God, the opportunity to believe in Jesus?
- ◆ But only to those who receive him did he give (1:12-13) “the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”



# Being Born Again...

- ◆ 1 Peter 1:23 “For you have been **born again** [ἀναγεγεννημένοι (*anagegennēmenoi*)], not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”
- ◆ You can see the parallel with John 1 here.
- ◆ There is a sense that receiving the word of God is sufficient to be born again.



# Contrast of Origins

**Born First Time**

**Born Again**

**Born of the Earth**

**Born from Above/Heaven**

**Born of Water**

**Born of Spirit**

**Born of Flesh**

**Born of God**

**Perishable**

**Imperishable**



# Being Born Again...

- ◆ In one sense there is a dualism inherent in this talk, but in another the mystery of the unity of a human being, and of God as trinity.
- ◆ The distinction of a dualism is useful because it helps us navigate origins of the actions of God and people.
- ◆ The unity of the language of spirit / wind, flesh / spirit, etc. is consistent with OT theological concept of the unity of a person.



# Being Born Again...

- ◆ Jewish: Salvation rooted to the lineage of Abraham
- ◆ Early Church: Associated with baptism (born of water and spirit)
- ◆ Catholic: Associated with the concept of conversion, and “Conversion to Christ involves making a genuine commitment to him and a personal decision to follow him as his disciple.” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Directory of Catechesis (2005) p. 48)
- ◆ John Wesley: “Our church supposes, that all who are baptized in their infancy, are at the same time born again. ... But ... it is sure all of riper years, who are baptized, are not at the same time born again.” (Wesley, J., *The works of the Reverend John Wesley*, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1831, pp. 405–406. )



# Being Born Again...

- ◆ Lutheran: “We are cleansed of our sins and born again and renewed in Holy Baptism by the Holy Ghost.” But that must be accompanied by works of repentance and daily contrition. Otherwise, the grace of baptism has been lost.

(Walther, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm (2008). Sermons and prayers for Reformation and Luther commemorations. Joel Baseley. p. 27.)

- ◆ Anglican: Consistent with the early church reading of baptism
- ◆ Reformed: Refers to the working of the Spirit, that motivates a person to respond to the Gospel. We do not perform the act of being born again, but respond to God by the power he provides us. We are passive. (again John 1:12)

(Shorter Westminster Catechism, Question 31)



# Being Born Again...

- ◆ Methodism: “new birth is necessary for salvation because it marks the move toward holiness. That comes with faith.” (Joyner, F. Belton (2007). *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers: Exploring Christian Faith*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 39.)
- ◆ New Birth “is that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life, when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.” (*Works*, vol. 2, pp. 193–194)
- ◆ Evangelicalism: New birth happens before baptism. It is a distinct experience. “Although many evangelicals allow that conversion can be a process, generally they see it as a specific, identifiable moment of time when a person simply and sincerely trusts in Jesus Christ as savior.” (Mullen, MS., in Kurian, GT., *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*, J. Wiley & Sons, 2012, p. 302.)



# Being Born Again...

- ◆ I know that this particular topic is a nearly complete tangle when we try to figure out what is going on.
- ◆ Are we missing anything? (well obviously, but what?)
- ◆ Can we sort out this action :: interaction :: response play?



# My Suggestion

- ◆ I believe the sequence of cause and effect about being born again and salvation is traceable but this is speculative.



# My Suggestion

1. People bear live people in the flesh.
2. Jesus is the light that lights every person that comes into the world. (1:9) Jesus' life was the light of all people. (1:4)
  - ◆ What does that life / light show?
  - ◆ The kingdom of God which one can't see without being born from above.
  - ◆ To enter that kingdom one must become like a little child. What are the attributes of a child that make entry possible?
  - ◆ Being born of water and spirit. Is the light equivalent to the spirit here?



# My Suggestion

3. The imputation of life / light / spirit takes place solely by God's hand without the interference of people.
4. Subsequent positive response of any person to the already living Spirit of God in that person who received that Spirit by God's hand is what gives an individual the right to become the children of God. (1:13)
5. The account of any particular relationship with God may be different from others, and that is where the Church collects their stories from, but the initial possibility is made by Christ when he gives his life to people.



# My Suggestion

6. That is being born again / from above
7. Many are called, but few chosen, the chosen who have positively responded to the gift of the spirit.
8. Few enter into life.
9. Being born from above does not give one a ticket into heaven, a ticket that requires a trusting relationship in Christ.
10. Being born from above is only the first condition of salvation given to all people.



<http://www.freebibleimages.org>



# John Testifies Again

John 3:22-36



# John the Baptist...

- ◆ Why are people going to Jesus to be baptized?
- ◆ John testifies that he himself must diminish in importance. Jesus must become greater.
- ◆ However in the language of honor/shame this zero-sum economy like that of the Greeks, is not the kingdom of God.



# John the Baptist...

- ◆ How often (bone to pick) have we heard that we must become nothing so that Jesus can increase in our lives. Is there any real competition between us and him?
- ◆ “bridegroom” metaphor: marriage and associated cultural trappings are in all the gospels.
- ◆ He doesn't say that Jesus is the messiah though he implies it.



# John the Writer...

- ◆ 31-35 The distinction between heaven and earth, spirit and flesh
- ◆ John the writer then “clarifies” the matter by specifying that Jesus is the son of God and has given him unlimited Spirit and authority over all.
- ◆ Conflict: “No one receives his testimony (32)” but “The one who receives his testimony (33)” Is this a temporal conflict? One that defines reception not of the testimony but is dependent on receiving Christ himself first.



# John the Writer...

- ◆ 3:36a “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life...”
- ◆ The word “believe” in John is almost exclusively an active word, a word that defines commitment. It is a defining theme in John.
- ◆ John 1:7,12,50; 2:11,22,23,24; 3:12(2x),15,16,18(3x),36 from “*pistis*” (πίστις) using a variety of forms, is found 15x in the first three chapters in John.



# John the Writer...

- ◆ 3:36b “Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”
- ◆ I believe that this passage illuminates the problem of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.



Guercino: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman



# Samaritan Woman

John 4:1-42 | At the sixth hour, the hour just before noon.



# Samaritan Woman...

On his way to Galilee, Jesus stopped in Sychar at the junction of the two main routes to Galilee from Judea.







St. Luke's Hospital

Nablus

Izmut

Deir al-Hatab

Askar

Jacob's Well

Balata

Har Gerizim

Har Brakha

Kafr Qallil

Rujeib



# Samaritan Woman...

- ◆ There are three other significant scenes of conversations at a well in the Bible.
- ◆ Abraham's servant Eliezer and Rebekah (Gen. 24), Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29), Moses and daughters of Reuel, Zipporah's father (Ex. 2).
- ◆ These complex narrative scenes are a backdrop for Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman.



# Samaritan Woman...

- ◆ Jesus is alone with the woman. The disciples have gone to buy food. **Will you give me to drink?**
- ◆ Jesus does not focus on the woman's immorality.
- ◆ The scene (Brant) includes elements of water dispute, speech acts of supplication, conflict, recognition and reversal.



# Samaritan Woman...

- ◆ Jesus sets himself lower than the woman by sitting, and being alone with a woman he invites impurity.
- ◆ In the modern age, how does this play in the Church?



# Samaritan Woman...

- ◆ He becomes the supplicant, the woman rejects his request by saying that Jews and Samaritans have nothing to do with each other. True ... the Jews count Samaritans as unclean, inferior. Reference? Post exilic.
- ◆ Then Jesus reverses the roles, saying that if she knew who he was...



El Veronés: Jesús y el centurión



Jesus Heals Official's Son

John 4:43-54