

John 3:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Analysis

Nicodemus's question—'How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?'—reveals confusion about Jesus' meaning. He takes 'born again' literally, which seems absurd. Yet his question opens the door for deeper explanation. Nicodemus represents intelligent people who struggle with spiritual categories. Physical rebirth is impossible; that's precisely Jesus' point—spiritual rebirth requires divine intervention, not human effort.

Historical Context

Nicodemus was among Israel's most educated religious teachers. His inability to grasp Jesus' meaning shows that spiritual understanding requires more than intelligence or training. The question 'how can these things be?' (verse 9) reveals the limits of natural reason in apprehending spiritual truth.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why do intelligent people often struggle with spiritual concepts that seem simple?
2. How does Nicodemus's literalism warn against reducing spiritual realities to physical categories?

Interlinear Text

λέγει	πρὸς	αὐτοῦ	ὁ	Νικόδημος	Πῶς	δύναται	
saith	unto	him	G3588	Nicodemus	How	can	
G3004	G4314	G846		G3530	G4459	G1410	
ἄνθρωπος	γεννηθῆναι	γέρων	ὢν	μὴ	δύναται	εἰς	
a man	be born	old	when he is	can	can	into	
G444	G1080	G1088	G5607	G3361	G1410	G1519	
τὴν	κοιλίαν	τῆς	μητρὸς	αὐτοῦ	δεύτερον	εἰσελθεῖν	καὶ
G3588	womb	G3588	mother's	him	the second time	he enter	and
	G2836		G3384	G846	G1208	G1525	G2532
γεννηθῆναι							
be born							
G1080							

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:14 (Parallel theme): But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (Parallel theme): For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

John 3:3 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 6:53 (Parallel theme): Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

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