

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 ὡν 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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