

## Lutheran Confessions

47] Here a question occurs by which the devil, through his sects, confuses the world, namely, *Of Infant Baptism, whether children also believe, and are justly baptized.* Concerning this we say briefly: 48] Let the simple dismiss this question from their minds, and refer it to the learned. But if you wish to answer, 49] then answer thus:—

**That the Baptism of infants is pleasing to Christ is sufficiently proved from His own work, namely, that God sanctifies many of them who have been thus baptized, and has given them the Holy Ghost;** and that there are yet many even to-day in whom we perceive that they have the Holy Ghost both because of their doctrine and life; as it is also given to us by the grace of God that we can explain the Scriptures and come to the knowledge of Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Ghost. 50] But if God did not accept the baptism of infants, He would not give the Holy Ghost nor any of His gifts to any of them; in short, during this long time unto this day no man upon earth could have been a Christian. Now, since God confirms Baptism by the gifts of His Holy Ghost, as is plainly perceptible in some of the church fathers, as St. Bernard, Gerson, John Hus, and others, who were baptized in infancy, and since the holy Christian Church cannot perish until the end of the world, they must acknowledge that such infant baptism is pleasing to God. For He can never be opposed to Himself, or support falsehood and wickedness, or for its promotion impart His grace and Spirit. 51] This is indeed the best and strongest proof for the simple-minded and unlearned. For they shall not take from us or overthrow this article: *I believe in one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.* (The Large Catechism, IV)

## Put it into Practice

*These questions have been put together to help you as you extend and apply tonight's Scripture to your life.*

### Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, who has given to us, Your servants, grace, by the confession of a truth faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity, we implore You that You would keep us steadfast in this faith and evermore defend us from all adversities; who lives and reigns, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.** (*Collect for the Holy Trinity*)

**Word of God: St. John 3:1-21 (on back)**

### Questions to Ponder in Prayer

1. What do we know about Nicodemus from verse 1? (Note: “The Pharisees were of the party which laid utmost stress on the strictest outward observance of the law, around which they had built up a forbidding hedge of traditions and human

commandments. There were utterly self-righteous and cultivated a formalism that was ostentatious to a degree, especially in observing ceremonies, fastings, almsgiving, long prayers, tithes, etc.... The people revered the Pharisees for their supposed holiness and for their zeal regarding the law;” K&D, p.115.)

- Compare Nicodemus statement in verse 2 with those who “believed” because of the miraculous signs, but Jesus knew they didn’t really believe(2:23-25). What does Nicodemus think of Jesus at this point? And thus, why does he come to Jesus? Why does he come at night? How does Jesus begin his replies(v.3,5,11)?
- Would Nicodemus have understood Jesus’ words about “the kingdom of God?” How did Nicodemus and Jesus differ in the way one entered God’s kingdom?
- Though an old, respected Pharisee, what words does Nicodemus not understand?
- What does the requirement “born again” (v.4 a second time) imply concerning everything connected with the first birth? Is “being born” active or passive?
- Nicodemus asks, “How?” Jesus explains “born again” is given by means of “water and the Spirit.” What is that? (Mt 3:6,11; Mt 28:19, Titus 3:5-8) Note that Nicodemus did not even flinch concerning a reference to the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus makes the point of question #5 even clearer. What is “flesh” in verse 6?
- Nicodemus can’t get beyond the “surprise” of Jesus’ great claim for what holy baptism does, and must do for Nicodemus(“You” v.7). Why?
- Jesus gives the example of the wind. Does Nicodemus acknowledge the reality of the wind? Based on what? How do we know that baptism works? Based on what?
- With verse 9, Nicodemus allows the claim to stand, but what does he question? Instead of be surprised(v.7) and ask questions(v.9), what should Nicodemus do?
- In verse 10, who is surprised? Why is He surprised?
- According to verse 11 what is the reason for Nicodemus denial of baptism?
- The “we” must refer to Jesus and \_\_\_\_\_ (John 1:6-8, 15, 19-34, **esp. 24-25**)?
- Jesus contrasts the earthly things with the heavenly things. If Nicodemus doesn’t understand earthly repentance, faith, baptism, etc., he surely won’t understand the heavenly counsel(inner relation, motivation and love of the Trinity). Who alone can speak as a witness of those heavenly things?
- Who does Jesus claim to be with verse 13? Some texts include the end of verse 13 saying, “...except the one who came from heaven—The Son of Man, *who is in heaven.*” (See NIV footnote) How do you understand those words?
- When was Jesus lifted up(Jn 12:32-33)? How does Numbers 21:4f, apply to Nicodemus? What point is Jesus pushing with Nicodemus?
- The divine necessity(“must be lifted up”), is so that believers “...may have eternal life.” The reason it must be this way is because of God’s graciousness revealed in verse 16. What do we learn about God’s desire(heavenly things)?
- What is Nicodemus told is the source and reason for salvation? (v. 16)
- According to verse 16-17, who does God love and save? (objective justification)
- What is the first warning given to Nicodemus (v.16)? How does anyone receive that gift? (v.18)
- At death, will there be a judging of each person to determine their eternal fate?
- RESULT: “The Light has come into the world.” When? “Men loved darkness.” Who is to be faulted for damnation? “deeds will be exposed” What was their fear? The believer “comes into the light.” What about the believer’s deeds(v.21)?

### 6:30 PM “Learn by Heart”

*Through simple repetition those present will inwardly digest...*

Hymn “**We All Believe in One True God**”  
ASBH #38

Table of Duties: To Servants, Hired Men, Laborers: Eph 6:5-8, To Masters and Mistresses: Eph 6:9 (Catechism, p.33)  
John 3:5-6

### 7:00 PM “Catechesis”

+ Opening Verses

“O Lord, open my lips...” p.224

+ Ascription of Praise

“Praise to you, O Christ. Alleluia.” p.225

Reading

St. John 3:1-17 (back)

Hymn

“**We All Believe in One True God**”  
(Augustana Service #38, insert)

Catechesis on... (back)

St. John 3:1-17

Liturgy

Catechism

--*prayer based on reading*

+ Lord’s Prayer (sung) p.284

+ Responsive Prayer 2 p. 273-275

(skip Lord’s Prayer)

Apostles’ Creed

Psalm verses

Collect of the Day

--*prayer based on reading*

Evening Prayer

Benedicamus

Benediction

## Catechesis on St. John 3:1-17

1 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.”

3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

4 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?”

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, 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. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

10 Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? 11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (NKJV)

## Blind Human Reason Alone

Ap III, 26-27, 31-32 “False also is this, that men are accounted righteous before God because of **the righteousness of reason** [works and external piety]. 27] False also is this that **reason, by its own strength, is able to love God above all things, and to fulfill God’s Law**, namely, truly to fear God, to be truly confident that God hears prayer, to be willing to obey God in death and other dispensations of God, not to covet what belongs to others, etc.; although reason can work civil works.

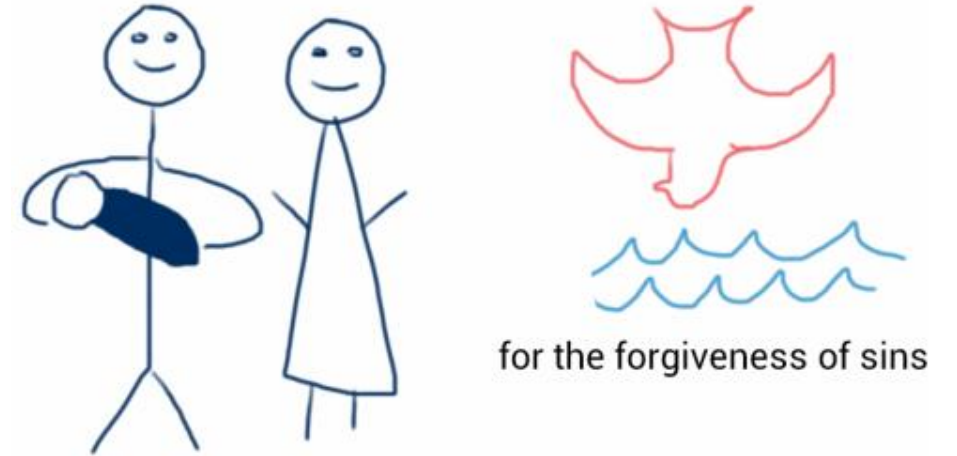
31] And John 8, 36: *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* Therefore by reason we cannot be freed from sins and merit the remission of sins. And in John 3, 5 it is written: *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But if it is necessary to be born again of the Holy Ghost, the righteousness of reason does not justify us before God, and does not 32] fulfill the Law*, Rom. 3, 23: *All have come short of the glory of God*, i.e., are destitute of the wisdom and righteousness of God, which acknowledges and glorifies God. Likewise Rom. 8, 7. 8: *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Historical Introductions, 61: “In an antisnergistic confession published by Schluesselburg, we read: “This doctrine [of conversion by God’s grace alone] is simple, clear, certain, and irrefutable if one looks to God’s Word alone and derives the *Nosce teipsum*, Know thyself, from the wisdom of God. But since poor men are blind, they love their darkness more than the light, **as Christ says John 3, and insist on criticizing and falsifying God’s truth by means of blind philosophy**, which, forsooth, is a shame and a palpable sin, if we but had eyes to see and know ... **Whatever blind reason produces in such articles of faith against the Word of God is false and wrong.** For it is said: *Mulier in ecclesia taceat!* Let philosophy and human wisdom be silent in the Church.” (*Catalogus* 5, 665f.)

## Gospel

FC Ep VII, 21 “...and on the other hand, we maintain and believe, according to the simple words of the testament of Christ, the true, yet supernatural eating of the body of Christ, as also the drinking of His blood, which human senses and reason do not comprehend, but **as in all other articles of faith our reason is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and this mystery is not apprehended otherwise than by faith alone, and revealed in the Word alone.**”

Catechesis  
On  
St. John 3:1-17



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