

Title: "What if Nicodemus was a Buddhist?"
Explaining John 3:3-8 within the Theravada Buddhist Context

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Approval Date: 11th May 2015

Institution: Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Number of Pages: 77

Keywords: Falam Chin Student

ABSTRACT

This research paper deals with the subject of "born of water and spirit" in John 3:3-8, and it attempts to achieve two purposes: [a] Exegetically discovering the meaning of "born of water and spirit," and [b] Communicating the resultant message to a Theravada Buddhist in a culturally and contextually relevant way.

With this two-fold purpose in mind, this paper is divided up into two sections. In the first section I have examined the context of John's gospel, significant terms and phrases in John 3:3-8, other related theological data from the Old Testament, and I eventually put forward the view that "born of water and spirit" is not a reference to two separate things, but a dual action of God – God's action of imparting life and purification through the Holy Spirit.

In the second section, I have analyzed the Buddhist's worldview on water, spirit, born again, born anew [or reborn] and suggested certain points that should be considered in applying the text, such as the need to focus on the life story of Nicodemus, the need to explain about God, the use of illustrations on water relevant to the Buddhist religious and cultural practice, the need to distinguish the Holy Spirit from other spiritual beings such as demons, ghosts, witches, or "nats". I have also

suggested certain terms which should be avoided such as *born again*, *born anew*, *reborn* or *rebirth*, and highlighted the need to use certain terms with clarification such as *from above*, *enlightened* or *awakened*.

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