

## John 3:1-21, "Jesus Meets with Nicodemus, Part 1"

- ✓ About Nicodemus, "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council." **John 3:1.** He would have been significant in the Jewish religious world.
  - ✓ Many believe Nicodemus was in the Sanhedrin, one of 70 men on the ruling council.
  - ✓ There were two major sects within the Sanhedrin.
    - Pharisees: They accepted the Torah, the verbal traditions, and believed in life after death.
    - Saducees: They only accepted the Torah and did not believe in the verbal traditions or life after death.
  - ✓ He was among those in leadership looking for a sign after Jesus cleared the temple or at least sympathetic to this miracle worker, Jesus. Nicodemus was obviously drawn to Jesus and somewhat active in the last days of Jesus' life.
  - ✓ Nicodemus later calls for a fair trial for Jesus. "Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, "Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?", **John 7:50-51.**
  - ✓ "Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Joseph was now a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who had earlier visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds." **John 19:38-39.** This was a large quantity of very costly spices.
  - ✓ "He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." **John 3:2.** Night could be considered to symbolize darkness, as Nicodemus had not yet come to the light of Jesus. This is no knock on Nicodemus, as precious few have come to Him at this point. This may just have been the most convenient time to get to Jesus when he was away from the crowds.
  - ✓ Nicodemus sees Jesus as another teacher with God's "seal of approval" because of His miracles. Jesus often clashed with the Pharisees because of their legalism, hypocrisy, and inflexibility of traditions.
  - ✓ Nicodemus seems to be different and may represent others who were willing to give Jesus "a chance".
  - ✓ Nicodemus has no recorded declaration of faith in Jesus as the "Christ."
  - ✓ Nicodemus seems to be saying: You're good, I'm good, let's have a Rabi to Rabi talk, I'm trained in theology, You do miracles, let's team up. But they are not on the same level—not at all! A theologian is approaching a figure known originally as a carpenter. Jesus is from above and is therefore high above the learned Nicodemus. Jesus would immediately point Nicodemus upward to things above. Above his pay grade and above his current understanding. Believing in the miracle is not sufficient grounds for salvation. God was not with Jesus; Jesus is God!
  - ✓ "In reply, Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is "born-again." **John 3:3.** If this were question and answer time, Nicodemus might be asking something like, "Are you here to bring something new, interesting, or different to the work of the kingdom?" Is this additive to our work? Does this clarify any of our traditions? Jesus' answer is stark, out of left field, and seemingly off-the-wall.
  - ✓ Jesus immediately shifts the conversation from what is happening "now" to the Messianic kingdom talk, which the Jews and everybody else had completely misunderstood.
  - ✓ We know that this may indicate that Nicodemus comes representing the Pharisees, who were strict keepers of the law, and no, not all of them were complete hypocrites. Nicodemus came with a "we" statement indicating that Jesus was different and amazing.
  - ✓ Jesus responds with a "you" statement. Jesus did not respond, "You are mostly right, but you will not see the Kingdom of God unless you are "born-again." This does not reply to the words that Nicodemus has spoken, but perhaps to his deepest desire. Most assuredly, Jesus addressed Nicodemus' deepest need, eternal life in the kingdom of God.
  - ✓ Jesus focuses on His reign rather than His realm. Messianic delivery systems are right, just, and fair! When Jesus reigns in our lives, we enter the realm of His presence. As close to "heaven on earth" as we can get! If we get to see His rule, the Messianic kingdom, we will get to be in His presence!
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- ✓ We all want to fit in. Let that be a byproduct rather than a goal. Don't try to fit God into your life and your plan. Fit in by doing His will. Focus on obedience, and God will fit you into the place where you were designed to fit.
  - ✓ Entrance into this reign of the kingdom requires a new birth. This is necessary for everyone.
  - ✓ Being religious and moral is not the ticket to the kingdom. It always had the element of "My plan was wrong". It is not simply adding or subtracting a few things from our lives. No amount of education or self-change can change your destination unless it leads to a "born-again" experience. The old nature must be replaced with a new nature that comes only from above, only from God himself.
    - ✎ I was just recently thinking about the day I was born. Remember how you were born? How you helped the doctor out so much. How you made the whole process easier for your mom. How you planned the perfect day and time to be born? You had no say or control over your first birth. You had no vote. A supernatural birth has some similar attributes. Unbelievers are blind and dead. It takes a miracle of God for a blind man to see.
  - ✓ "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.", **Matthew 11:5**. It takes a miracle of God for a dead man to do anything! When you're dead, nothing works. It takes a miracle of God for someone to be "born-again." You cannot be "born again" by yourself! When you have experienced it, you can't unsee or unknow it. A new paradigm has begun. A new everything. Being born again is not an add-on to your genius self but a complete replacement for your current priority list. James Strong says: The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and, when the sinner believes, imparts the life of God. Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 295.
  - ✓ Notice the three elements: the Spirit, the Word, and the Life—God's abundant life. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.", **John 10:10**.
  - ✓ "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins," **Ephesians 2:1**. Not just hampered, not optimal, or dysfunctional, but dead. Just as God breathed physical breath into Adam, He must do so for each of us in the spiritual realm. Ever since Adam and Eve's forced exit from Eden, we have all been born outside of paradise. "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," **Romans 3:23**.
  - ✓ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.", **Ephesians 2:4-5**.
  - ✓ When I was young, "born-again" was a term I heard often. The explanation I received was as good as most children can hear and understand. This term appears to be a new concept for Nicodemus and perhaps many of the hearers of Jesus words. Are you one of those who consider themselves to be "born-again" Christians? This is often received with disdain and rolled eyes! I certainly hope you are, because Jesus says that only the "born-again" people will see the kingdom of God and reap its benefits!
  - ✓ Rehabilitation of destructive behavior will not be permanent without a complete change of the heart. Outward change without a true heart change is a recipe for relapse and no hope to see the Kingdom! Not so with the true believer, the person born from above. We have acknowledged God and put Him in the "God Spot" of our lives. This concept, Jesus words about being "born-again", from above fell flat with Nicodemus.
  - ✓ "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth: no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be "born-again".' 'The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit.'" **John 3:4-8**.
  - ✓ The Spirit moves how the Spirit moves. Even so, that does not leave us without responsibility. God will interrupt our lives with evidence of His goodness. It is our job to respond appropriately. "Yes" is always the appropriate answer to Him.
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- ✓ "The heavens proclaim His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory," **Psalm 97:6**. You can see the effects of the wind by watching palm trees, flags, trash, and hair.
  - ✓ "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.", **Romans 1:20**. Evidence of God's power and goodness is everywhere! Faith is not looking away when God reveals Himself.
  - ✓ "And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." **Hebrews 11:6**. "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart." **Jeremiah 29:13**. All of these factors and events move us toward being "born-again."
  - ✓ As a ruling religious leader, Jesus thinks Nicodemus should grasp this. "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, We speak of what We know, and We testify to what We have seen, but still you people do not accept Our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things, and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?", **John 3:9-12**.
  - ✓ Are you "born-again", from above, but yet you are hanging on to the old rules that you set for yourself? Do you cling to your old expectations of how life should be? Abandon them! Live in the newness of God's presence.
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