

Nicodemus Visits Jesus

A Pharisee named Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and learns about being born again and God's love for the world through His Son.

John 3:1-21

CHARACTERS: Nicodemus, Jesus

THEMES: New Birth, Salvation, God's Love, Faith

THERE WAS A man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews and a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council. He was a respected teacher, learned in the Law and the traditions of Israel. Yet despite his knowledge and position, he recognized that Jesus had something he lacked. He came to Jesus by night, perhaps to avoid the scrutiny of his fellow Pharisees or perhaps because he wanted an unhurried, private conversation.

Nicodemus began respectfully: 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' He acknowledged Jesus's divine credentials based on the signs he had witnessed. But Jesus, knowing the deeper need in Nicodemus's heart, cut straight to the essential issue. He answered, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

Nicodemus struggled to understand this concept. 'How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' His question revealed he was thinking in purely physical terms. Jesus explained, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of

the Spirit is spirit.' Physical birth produces physical life, but spiritual birth is necessary for spiritual life.

Jesus continued, 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' Just as the wind is invisible yet real and powerful, so is the Spirit's work in regeneration. Nicodemus asked, 'How can these things be?' Jesus responded, 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?' As a teacher of Scripture, Nicodemus should have understood from the prophets about God's promise to give His people a new heart and new spirit.

Jesus then revealed the heart of the gospel: 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' This is perhaps the most famous verse in Scripture, encapsulating the entire message of salvation. Jesus explained that belief in Him is the dividing line: 'He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' The conversation concluded with Jesus describing how light has come into the world, but people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil, while those who do truth come to the light. Nicodemus left that night with much to ponder, and later proved his growing faith by defending Jesus before the Sanhedrin and by helping to bury Jesus's body after the crucifixion.