



Series: SEEING IS BELIEVING
(Book Study Gospel of John)

Christ First Church
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Sermon 9: Nic At Night (Part 1)
(John 3: 1-21)

August 2, 2020

INTRO: Turn your Bibles or Turn them on to a very popular chapter in the Book of John. St. John's Gospel, chapter 3. In today's sermon titled, "NIC AT NIGHT", we will listen in on a conversation between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus. We will not get to it today, but it's in this conversation that John 3:16 is given to the world.

This is the 9th sermon in our series on the Gospel of John. This first narrative in chapter 3 comprises 21 verses. I'm not sure how far we will get today, but I am certain we won't get through all of them. But in an attempt to make as much progress as possible, let's get into the reading of God's Word, and notice...

1) THE INTRIGUE: vv 1-2 *"Now 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."*

What is the Word of God telling us in these first two verses? The first verse mentions a Pharisee by name. His name was Nicodemus. Now, the Pharisees were a religious group in Jewish life, who were fastidious in keeping the letter of the Law. God had given the Law to the Jews through His prophet Moses. That Law, as it came from God, was perfect. But the Pharisees continued to add certain intricacies to the Law. More than likely, there were many reasons and differing agendas behind these additions, but whatever the case, it was their interpretive legalistic attitude toward the Law that often caused them to be in opposition to Jesus during His ministry.

V 1 ends by telling us that Nicodemus was also, "a ruler of the Jews", meaning he was a member of the Sanhedrin Court. The Sanhedrin was the ruling body of the Jews. Each Jewish city occupied by Rome, was granted a Sanhedrin which functioned as a lower court. Under Roman authority in the time of Christ, the Jewish nation was allowed a measure of self-rule, and the Sanhedrin was that ruling body for matters regarding Jewish law and religion. This was the court that ultimately condemned Jesus to die, yet they had to get Pilate to approve their sentence, since the death penalty was beyond their jurisdiction under Roman law. It appears that Nicodemus was part of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

All we know of Nicodemus, is from the Gospel of John. He is mentioned three times in the Gospel. Here, in John 3. Again in John 7, and then finally in John 19 after the crucifixion of Jesus.

V 2 tells us that Nicodemus came to talk to Jesus on one particular night. The fact that scripture is specific that he "came to Jesus by night" could be significant. He may have had a measure of faith that he did not want his colleagues to know of. But for whatever reason, there's a feeling of SECRECY and INTRIGUE associated with this meeting.

I) THE INTRIGUE: vv 1-2 CONTINUED I don't know about you, but I love a good suspense thriller, and these verses have that feel. Read with me again...

v 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."*

Let me draw your attention to the words, "Rabbi" and "teacher" in this verse. Rabbi is an untranslated, transliteration of the original Greek word. It means teacher. But it's a much more intimate word than is the Greek word, Didaskalos, which also means teacher. So here, Nicodemus comes to Jesus, and He addresses Him with the use of the word, Rabbi. When one used this word, it was used as a show of honor. It literally means MY teacher. It also means MY MASTER, or my Master teacher. It carries with it the esteem of honor and appreciation. Nicodemus uses both words here. *"Rabbi (my teacher, my master), we know that you are a didaskalos (teacher) come from God,"*

Now, the disciples called Jesus Rabbi all the time. They did so because they believed that He was the Christ, the Chosen of God. The fact that Nicodemus, a Pharisee, uses this phrase, tells us something about what's going on in his heart. The Spirit is revealing something to Nic. Nicodemus also uses the plural, "WE know that..." It would seem it's not JUST Nic who thinks that Jesus is something special, but also, others do as well. We have no way of knowing who's included in Nic's admission, so this just adds to the INTRIGUE!

APPLICATION: Can I stop here for just a moment and ask? What do you think of Jesus? If you were to meet Him face to face, today, how would you address Him? Is He YOUR teacher, YOUR master? Is He YOUR SAVIOR? Is HE YOUR LORD? Or, is He just another teacher? Or, is He someone else's Savior, but not YOURS?

Let's look at the last part of v 2 *"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for (because) no one can do these signs (miracles) that you do unless God is with him."*

Nicodemus has come to the conclusion that Jesus has indeed come from God, because, he has seen, or at least heard credible accounts, of the miracles Jesus has been performing. He deduces that NO ONE can perform the miracles that Jesus has, unless He be from God! You will remember that I spoke last week on the difference between a mental or intellectual belief in Jesus, and a belief of the heart that leads to salvation. At this point Nicodemus has a rational belief, a head knowledge of sorts, that tells him Jesus is something special, but he hasn't come to that place of whole hearted surrender that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, and very God. BUT the Spirit is doing a visible work in his heart. Oh, how I love to see God at work! Isn't this great? Thank the Lord for His Spirit that reveals Jesus to us! Today, God wants you to know Jesus. He wants you to put your trust in Him and accept Him as your Lord and Savior. If the Spirit gives you faith to believe today, ACCEPT HIM! Sell out in total surrender to God! Let the Spirit of God move you from a place of intrigue and curiosity, to a committed relationship with Christ. YOU MAY SAY, OKAY, BUT HOW DO I DO THAT? Notice...

II) THE INSTRUCTION: vv 3-8 *"Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Here, the Word of God, and God, the Word, Jesus, tells us what we must do to have a relationship with God. Jesus tells Nicodemus, you must be BORN AGAIN! Notice Nic's reply...

I) THE INTRIGUE: vv 1-2

II) THE INSTRUCTION: vv 3-8 “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?”

V 4 is the natural man’s human response to v 3. You must be born again? How is that even possible? Nicodemus asked a question very similar to what most think of when they first hear of salvation. Those of us who have been in church all our lives, and know the lingo, forget that there are those in the world who do not understand our vernacular. They do not, and cannot, comprehend, unless we take the time to teach them from God’s Word, and the Spirit gives them understanding. It’s the Spirit of God that opens our hearts to receive the truths of God!

Look at vv 5-6 “Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, 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.”

“Truly, is translated from a Greek word we all know, and use in worship, the word, “Amen”. The Greek pronunciation being “a-main”. When used at the end of a sentence, amen means, so it is, or so be it. That is why the church says amen during sermons. When the preacher is proclaiming the truth of scripture, the appropriate response from those listening is a hardy Amen! It is a corporate agreement with what is being said.

Amen, when used at the front of a discourse carries the meaning, surely, truly or verily, or of a truth. John shares something with us in his gospel that no other writer in scripture does, he records the times that Jesus doubled up on the word by repeating it immediately; amen, amen, or truly, truly. John records Jesus doing this 25 times in his gospel. When doubled, these words have the force of a superlative, meaning, “most assuredly”, or “the solemn truth”. It carries the thought and weight that whatever follows these words can be trusted, and should be heeded. Jesus, then goes one step farther by adding the words, “I say to you”. So, we have the superlative, Truly, truly, (this is trustworthy) followed by, “I say to you”! (I, the Son of God, I, very God, say to you.) It is safe to assume that these “truly, truly” sayings of Christ are the most trustworthy statements ever spoken. And there are 25 of them! You need to be familiar with these.

This verse should have your full attention by now. Now, notice what follows...

V 5 “...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

What is Jesus saying here? He’s reiterating what He just said in v 3, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Both verses, 3 and 5, use the word “unless”, or “except”. These words put an end to the argument. Unless/Except a man is born again, he CANNOT see the Kingdom of God. That’s it! There is no plan B. So, what we’re dealing with here is of the utmost importance! V 5 “unless one is born of water and the Spirit”, That phrase can be a little difficult. What brings it into perspective is when we realize that being born “of water and Spirit” is the same as being born “again” (Gr. Anóthen: meaning, from above; of things which come from heaven or God). There are a few, not many, that believe that this is talking about water baptism, but according to the Greek construct of the sentence, and the fact that v 3 tells us plainly that this is something that comes from above, and not something we do ourselves here below, we know that interpretation can’t be correct.

I) THE INTRIGUE: vv 1-2

II) THE INSTRUCTION: vv 3-8 CONTINUED John MacArthur - Since Jesus expected Nicodemus to understand this truth, as noted in v 10, it must have been something with which he was familiar. Water and Spirit often refer symbolically in the Old Testament to spiritual renewal and cleansing. We see this in no less than seven passages in the OT. In one of the most glorious passages in all of Scripture describing Israel's restoration to the Lord by the new covenant, God said in Ezekiel 36: 24-27, "*For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.*" MacArthur goes on to say that it is this water and Spirit that Jesus is speaking of in John 3.

CONCLUSION: Let me close today by reading these last verses... "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 its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*"

You MUST be born again! You MUST! If you want to go to Heaven when you die, you MUST BE BORN FROM ABOVE.

Can I ask you, have you been born from above? Have you surrendered yourself to Christ? I'm talking about spiritual things here. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" This has nothing to do with your position in the community, your title at work, the amount of money you make, or how much you have in your retirement. BECAUSE SOMEDAY NONE OF THAT WILL MATTER! But what will matter is, have you been born from above? Have you been born again? Are you going to Heaven when you die? Jesus said, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

Today, you need to surrender yourself to God. Will you follow Jesus from this day forward? Walk away from all your old inclinations. Turn your back on your sin, and follow Him. He is calling. Will you answer?