

the Gospel according to

JOHN



SESSION 05:

John 3: “Jesus & Nicodemus”

JOHN 3:1-15

Overview:

Jesus' first conversation with an unbeliever is a one-on-one conversation with a well-respected Jewish leader, named Nicodemus. After hearing about some of his miracles, and possibly seeing Jesus cleanse the temple, Nicodemus comes secretly to Jesus at night to find out more about this mighty man of God. We'll see how Jesus gets right to the point and wastes no words. Jesus is not here to play games, flatter men, or receive their praise. He is here to speak the truth of God so that men might be saved from the darkness and enter the glorious light of the kingdom of God. Jesus will unveil some very key important spiritual truths that are absolute laws, and he will begin to hint at his atonement work on the cross that he will fulfill so that men might receive eternal life.

READ JOHN 3:1-8

Getting the Facts straight:

- In verse 1, what 3 facts do we learn about the man who came to Jesus?
- What does Nicodemus call Jesus?
- What does Nicodemus know, and why does he know it?
- What is the only hope for man to see the kingdom of God?
- What must man be born of in order to enter the kingdom of God?
- What does flesh beget?
- What does the Spirit beget?
- What did Jesus tell Nicodemus was a “must”?
- What did Jesus say that the blowing of the wind is like?

Going Deeper

- What can we imply about what type of man Nicodemus probably was based upon verse 1?
- What can we imply about the respect Nicodemus had for Jesus based on what he called him in verse 2?
- What can we learn about Jesus & his mission based on his response to Nicodemus in verse 3?
- What does it appear that being “born of water” is in the immediate context?
- What truths can we discern about the kingdom of God based upon verses 5-7?
- What do you think Jesus is trying to really reveal in vs 8?

❖ IMPORTANT: 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 15:35-50 & Titus 3:4-7

KEY POINTS:

- **Nicodemus gives Jesus some serious recognition (albeit in private).** He refers to Jesus as “Rabbi” which is a term of honor that a disciple calls a “Master” teacher. He acknowledges that all of the Pharisees know that Jesus must be a man of God as no man can do such miracles.
- **Jesus completely ignores Nicodemus’ praise.** He gets right to the point: There is no hope for any man unless he is born again. Mankind will never even see the kingdom of God (let alone enter it) unless they are born again. This is an absolute law no matter who you are.
- **The first birth is of the flesh.** The first birth is physical. The new birth (or second birth) is of the Spirit. It is spiritual. But it is just as real as the physical (even more so). Just as flesh gives birth to flesh, so the Spirit of God will give birth to a new spirit within us. This new spirit can see and enter the kingdom of God. Man must be born again.
- **The work of the Spirit bringing forth new births is like the wind.** It can be felt and heard, but it cannot be directed by man.

READ JOHN 3:9-15

Getting the Facts straight:

- What is Nicodemus' response to Jesus?
- What is Jesus' response to Nicodemus?
- What does Jesus speak and testify?
- What must you believe before you can believe heavenly things?
- Who is the only man to ascend up to heaven?
- Where was the Son of man even when he was talking to Nicodemus?
- What did Moses lift up in the wilderness?
- Who (in like manner) must be lifted up?
- What 2 things does believing in the Son of man lead to?

Going Deeper

- What are some things that Jesus' response in vs 10 imply?
- Who do you think the "we" in vs 11 refers to?
- What should we, as disciples of Christ, take away from the truths in vs 11?
- What other scriptures come to mind when pondering vs 12?
- What truths do you see from vs 13?
- What kind of serpent was lifted up in the wilderness? Why a serpent? What was required for the Israelites to be healed?
- Why is the Son of man likened to the serpent lifted up?

❖ POWER: Job 33:14-30 & Luke 16:11 & 2 Corinthians 5:21

KEY POINTS:

- **Religious leaders don't necessarily have spiritual understanding.** Nicodemus is a “master of Israel” and is completely clueless to what Jesus is teaching. If he cannot believe earthly truths (the new birth happens on earth), then how can he begin to believe heavenly truths.
- **Christ's doctrine is based on what he knows and what he has seen.** He is the only “man” from heaven who will ascend back to heaven, and currently is in heaven!
- **Just like the serpent on the pole** was the Israelites only hope when they were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness (see Numbers 21:4-9), so too will the Son of man being lifted up be the only hope of the lost world. Whoever turns to and believes on him will have eternal life. Jesus begins to point towards his work on the cross for salvation.

CONCLUSION & MOVING FORWARD

Jesus' first two conversations with unbelievers are both one-on-one conversations. The first one was here in John 3, and the second one we will see in John 4. In John 3, we saw Jesus talking to a well-respected Jewish Pharisee named Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night to find out more about him. In chapter 4, we will see Jesus go out of his way to talk to a commoner Samaritan woman at a well. Jesus deals with these two very different people quite differently, but ultimately, he speaks the truth to both of them. The things that Jesus reveals in these conversations set the tone for his doctrine throughout the rest of his ministry. Jesus does not play games or tell jokes. He gets to the heart of the issue. Jesus came to speak the truth. The truth is a sword that divides light from darkness. It divides spiritual from carnal. It divides truth from error. And ultimately, it will divide the unbelievers from the believers. Jesus is gracious to explain the truth to a point, but in the end, people will either humble themselves to believe his word, or people will harden themselves and reject his words.