

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN, John 3:1-21

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You may be the man in our story today! His name? Nicodemus. He was a sincere, honorable man, respected among his peers, having committed his life to serve God. Yet for all those admirable qualities Nicodemus was spiritually dead, living in darkness... condemned.

This story should make each one of us face the sobering reality that if Nicodemus was lost - then each one of us would be wise to evaluate our own life, because we may be just like him!

This is my prayer: that you will pause right now and ask God over the next few minutes as we look at this text to show you if you are Nicodemus.

This text - John 3:1-21 - is one of my favorite passages in the New Testament! The conversation that Jesus had one evening in Jerusalem contains what has become the best known verse in the world; John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

We begin by acknowledging the SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MAIN CHARACTER - NICODEMUS (1)

He was religious

The Pharisees were theological conservatives within Judaism. They were known as guardians of truth, defenders of orthodoxy. They did not deny cardinal doctrines like their counterparts, the Sadducees.

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The Pharisees were biblical separatists who held Scripture as the rule of faith and practice. As defenders of the Torah (God's Law) the Pharisees developed what many saw as a very helpful system to guide new converts and old alike who might struggle to otherwise apply God's law and precepts to everyday life. This practical guide to life was known as the Talmud. This is often called the "tradition of the fathers".

He was very respected

Nicodemus was a 'Ruler of the Jews.' This refers to his membership in the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was made up of 70 leaders after the example of Moses' elders in the wilderness. This group was made up of the High Priest, elders and teachers of the law. This body held some limited degree of power and autonomy under King Herod.

He was reaching out for answers

Nicodemus was intellectually honest - "we know you are a teacher come from God..." He wanted to find out who Jesus was and what he really believed. So he came to meet Jesus at night - perhaps he did not wish to openly be seen inquiring of Jesus so that he could escape uncomfortable questions that might be asked. Whatever the reason for the time of the meeting, his heart burned with questions that he wanted answered.

You must be born again! (3-8)

This new birth is extremely urgent. It is an unequivocal command, a non-negotiable necessity!

The new birth is something that had not yet happened to Nicodemus

This new birth is a spiritual birth. Without it you will not enter the kingdom of God (5). It is a birth that is produced by the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Just as you

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did not produce yourself physically, you do not produce yourself spiritually. It is a mysterious work of the Holy Spirit. (6-8)

You must believe in Jesus (9-13)

The issue is believing! The word “believe” is used 7 times in this brief text. You must be born again by believing - by faith alone. Nicodemus must believe the testimony regarding the new birth, and so must you! This testimony is reliable because Jesus is the one testifying. (11-13)

THE ILLUSTRATION OF SAVING FAITH THAT GIVES US NEW LIFE (14-15)

Illustration was something very familiar to Nicodemus (Num. 21:4-9)

He was a teacher of the law! This illustration was a window that shined light on the truth that Nicodemus was struggling with.

The illustration was a visual explanation of the faith required to be born again. You can find the full account of what Jesus is referring to in Numbers chapter 21.

The Sin - Complaining (Num. 21:4-5)

The Sentence - Death (Num. 21:6). Sin is a poison that flows through your veins and it is killing you.

The Solution - Look and Live (Num. 21:7-9). You must hear the message, you must believe the message, you must respond to the message! God must provide the solution, God must open your ears to hear the message, God must draw you to receive the message.

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Illustration requires personal application (15)

Just as Moses lifted up the snake on the pole, even so **MUST** the Son of Man be lifted up. The lifting up of Christ on the cross was necessary for us to be born again! Why?

Because you have sinned

Because you are sentenced to death! God is just - his judgement will fall upon you for your sin.

Because if you want to live - you must look to Him!

THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL (16)

For God - the greatest lover

So loved - the greatest degree

The world - the greatest number

That He gave - the greatest act

His only begotten Son - the greatest gift

That whosoever - the greatest invitation

Believes - the greatest simplicity

In Him - the greatest Person

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Should not perish - the greatest deliverance

But - the greatest difference

Have - the greatest certainty

Everlasting life - the greatest possession

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CONDEMNED OR NOT CONDEMNED - WHICH ONE ARE YOU? (17-21)

God's purpose for sending his Son is to save you (17)

poison of sin is killing you - the wages of sin is death!

God's love for you was so great He chose to sacrifice His own Son so that He could rescue you! (Rom. 5:8 - God demonstrated His love to you in that while you were still a sinner Christ died for you!)

If you do not believe in Jesus you are condemned - judged guilty! (18-21)

Refusal to look to Jesus and live means its only a matter of time before you realize the awful reality of your condemnation. (18)

Refusal to look to Jesus means that you love darkness instead of light, your evil deeds are more precious to you than life! (19)

Refusal to look to Jesus means that you refuse to expose your evil deeds to the light so that they can be dealt with! (20). Like a cockroach that scurries for the darkest corner your comfort zone is hiding and darkness where you can practice your sin in secret.

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Refusal to look to Jesus means you have embraced the lie instead of the truth (21a)
Nicodemus believed in Jesus (19:39)

Are you Nicodemus? Nicodemus was trying to live a good and religious life that would be pleasing to God but he had never been born again spiritually! His faith was in his standing at his “church”, his reputation as a Bible teacher, his good works as a Pharisee - but he was not looking in faith to Jesus.

Nicodemus was invited to look to Jesus and live! You Must Be Born Again! Are you?