

Nick at Night

Who do you say I am? Overview of Discussion with Peter at Caesarea Philippi We are going to look at the life of Jesus.... Study what He taught, observe what He did, Decide for ourselves who He is and what that means to us. No other pursuit in our lives is more important than this one

In fact...Jesus told Peter.... That the way Peter and You and I really know who Jesus is.... Comes only from revelation by God We learn about Jesus....we gain some facts..study His life Try to come to our own conclusions based on the facts But knowing Jesus intimately is not a mind thing It is a heart thing

It is a heart thing As you spend time pursuing Him...asking questions trying to understand Him...something begins to happen in your Spirit When you really pursue Him...when you really have to know... He will reveal Himself to you...God Himself will introduce you to His Son

But many of us...never experience that Because we are not really searching for Him We don't come to Him with an open mind Our pursuit of Him is superficial We really just want Him to validate what we are doing

Many search for Jesus without really wanting to find Him Because we really don't want to change So we half-heartedly go through the motions... And wonder why we can't connect with Him But there is a promise in Scripture found in Jeremiah

Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV) 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

When you get to the point where you absolutely must know When you are ready to surrender if He is real... When your search for Him is no longer in your head...but in your heart Then...God will reveal His Son to you.

The pursuit of Jesus must be a Spiritual one As our hearts seek to know God..to understand His Words...to learn from Jesus' life We come with tons of questions.....tons of doubts.... Can I share with you...if you are trying to find Jesus....that doubts and questions don't go away

Everyone who follows Jesus...including your Pastor...if totally honest have lots of doubt and tons of questions That is why we walk in faith and not in certainty

Guys its like that List you had before your got married You know....the long list of reasons you will never get married You have lots of questions....what will my life be like...what will have to change What sacrifice will I have to make...what about my independence.... And you come up with this list.....and decide you will never get married But then..you meet....her. And you have never...felt that way about anyone in your life As you spend time with her...get to know her...she pours out her love on you.... And everything changes... Because you are falling in love. Now the discussion is not about getting married.... But rather....marrying her.

Note that your list of questions hasn't changed It has just shrunk in importance Some of those things will get answered along the way Some will require that you do life differently But it

doesn't matter.... Because the relationship is more important...than the answers You just trust that if you are in the relationship Those things will be part of the journey

The Same thing.... Happens when your truly pursue Jesus You come to Him with doubts and questions Maybe thousands of questions You may have some iron clad reasons why you will never be a Christ Follower They are arrogant...intolerant...judgmental...prudish...hypocritical...

But then along the way..... If you seek Him with all of your heart.... He pours out His love on you....and you fall in love Note that your list of questions hasn't changed It has just shrunk in importance Some of those things will get answered along the way Some will require that you do life differently But it doesn't matter....

Because the relationship is more important...than the answers You just trust that if you are in the relationship Those things will be part of the journey Your list hasn't changed...its just that this new relationship... Has trumped it.

That the awareness of who Jesus is....doesn't come from a pursuit of the mind It comes from a revelation to you in your heart When you honestly pursue Jesus....God blesses you with His love He floods you with His love....His Spirit pours over you.... And you just know...you know Jesus is real Because you have experienced Him....You can't explain how it happened You are new...different....changed....SPIRITUALLY

2000 years ago...Jesus had an encounter with a man Who was pursuing Him with his heart.... We find this story in John 3 This story introduces a term that many find offensive today This story explains why we as a church do everything that we do Lets take a look at it

John 3:1–2 (ESV) 3 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night

This is the original "Nick at Night" Nicodemus... A Pharisee His job was to keep the Law...to maintain the Scriptures He was a member of the Sanhedrin- the esteemed ruling council He was at the top of the religious order...looking down...his words carried weight and swayed opinion Well educated....wealthy....well respected

That means that he belonged to the best group in Israel. They believed in the inspiration of the Old Testament, they believed in the coming of the Messiah, they believed in miracles, and they believed in the Resurrection. Unlike the Saducees who did not believe in the Resurrection...that is why they are sad...you see.

IMAGE 1 Other Pharisees had rejected Jesus But Nicodemus was still pursuing truth He came at night... Not in an official capacity...but rather in a personal one Maybe he wanted to avoid the gossip...maybe he just wanted a quieter time He has a lot to lose here...but he comes Everyone who pursues Jesus risks something. You and I had to risk something to pursue Jesus. We risk our self sufficiency, we risk our pride, we risk our reputation....Nicodemus represents all of us.

Could Jesus, he wondered, really be the Messiah? Nicodemus had rubbed shoulders with the best He had a lifetime of experience studying the Word...God's writings about Himself But now He is face to face with the Word...Incarnate

God's revelation of Himself He like all of us came in darkness...to the light of the World He had a question... He came just in the Nick of time....

John 3:2 (ESV) 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."

Jesus at Caesarea Phillipi Who do they say I am? Nicodemus probably speaks for the masses Jesus was a good teacher and He probably came from God That is the party line in our culture too.

He says, "we know." Who is we? The Pharisees. He comes as a man of the Pharisees

The proof that he points to is the miracles Jesus performed. He had to recognize the miracles. Please notice that no one doubted the miracles of our Lord—not in that day!

Note that Nicodemus didn't actually ask a question....

Nicodemus is saying.... There is something Divine about you.....but We can't seem to fit it together with what we thought before your showed up We have studied the Scriptures....but you are not what we expected In a sense asking without asking....Help me figure this out...Help me wrap my brain around this

Then Jesus answers the question.... Before Nicodemus even can ask it...

John 3:3 (ESV) 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The question not asked but answered by Jesus was....How do we find the Kingdom of God? (Explain the Kingdom)

You can't see..you can't understand the Kingdom of God Unless...and here is a new term for you... You are born again. No one...No One...Nicodemus Including you...will understand what God is doing Until you are born again.

It was taught widely among the Jews at that time that since they descended from Abraham, they were automatically assured of heaven. In fact, some Rabbis taught that Abraham stood watch at the gate of hell, just to make sure that none of his descendants accidentally wandered in there

In Jesus' day, the common teaching among the Jewish people was that the first two aspects of the New Covenant had been fulfilled. They saw Israel gathered—at least in part—after the Babylonian exile. They saw strong spiritual movements like the Pharisees, which they believed fulfilled the promise of spiritual transformation. All they waited for was the reign of the Messiah.

That's why Jesus' statement about the new birth was so strange to Nicodemus. He *thought* that the Jewish people already had it; they certainly weren't looking for it. They only looked for a triumphant Messiah.

I know you are a good person.. I know you are a religious leader...I know you know the law I know you have perfect attendance at the Temple I know the world thinks you are a spiritual giant

But Nicodemus...not one individual enters the Kingdom of God Without being born again... Or literally born from above... Born from the Spirit The Nicodemus says... Perfect..."Thanks Jesus...glad you cleared that up for me" No that is not what he said...

John 3:3–4 (ESV) 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?"

I think Nick and Jesus were kind of laughing at this point It is a bad visual.... Surely Nicodemus says...that is not what you mean. I don't understand how you can be born a second time I know what it means to be born physically I know how we came into this world...

Are you talking about another birth.... Coming into another world?I know this life....are you talking about another life?

John 3:5–6 (ESV) 5 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.

Now what does it mean to be born of water and of the Spirit? There are those who think that to be born of water is a reference to water baptism. But this would be a strange expression if it did refer to that.

Some interpret "born of water" as the physical birth which is a birth in water; that is, the child in the womb is in water. I don't think that is what is meant here at all. He wasn't talking about the difference between natural birth and spiritual birth, but He was talking about *how* a man could be born "from above" or "born again

Born of water and the Spirit? Often when Jesus spoke spiritual truths, he left everyone perplexed...either to walk away or to dive deeper. Nicodemus knew that water is symbolic of the Word of God. We will find later in this book that Jesus says,

John 17:17 (ESV)
17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

There is a cleansing, sanctifying power in the Word. In John 15:3 Jesus says,

John 15:3 (ESV)

3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

The Word of God is compared to water again and again. I believe that “born of water and of the Spirit” means that a person must be born again by the Holy Spirit using the Scripture. By full and total surrender to the Scriptures, the living Word of Christ..The Word that was in the beginning...the Word that is God...The Word incarnate... standing in front of Nicodemus.....Your faith and trust in Jesus cleanses you with the Word and allows you to be immersed in the Spirit. You must first be submerged in the Word...water...and then the same happens in the Spirit.

No one could be born again without the Word of God applied by the Spirit of God. One today is born from above by the use of water, which is the Word of God, and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, making it real to the heart.

There are three outstanding conversions in the Book of Acts. They have been given to us, I think, primarily as illustrations. There is the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the conversion of Cornelius, and the conversion of Paul.

In each of these three cases, the Word of God was used by the Spirit of God for their conversions. God’s method seems to be the Word of God, used by the Spirit of God, given through a man of God. I am confident that our Lord, saying that one must be born of water and of the Spirit, referred to the Spirit of God using the Word of God. Without this, Nicodemus could not enter into the kingdom of God.

God does not intend to change the flesh, meaning this old nature which you and I have. The fact of the matter is that it can’t be changed. The Word of God has much to say about this. The old nature is at war with God.

Romans 8:7–8 (ESV) 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

God has no program for our old nature, to retrieve it or improve it or develop it or save it. That old nature is to go down into the grave with us.

God does not intend to save the flesh at all. This old nature must be replaced by the new nature. The spiritual birth is necessary so that you and I may be given a new nature

Yes Jesus says...I am talking about a new kind of birth... I am talking about being born of the Spirit of God Flesh produces flesh..got it.. Dogs have dogs...Cats have cats.. People have little people

The Spirit of God...gives birth to the Spirit? You are talking about a Spiritual thing You are saying that something needs to happen... To each individual spiritually...the way it happened to them physically Imagine the look on Nicodemus' face

John 3:7–8 (ESV) 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Again, Nicodemus *did* marvel at this statement, because he—like most all Jews of his time—believed they *already had* the inner transformation promised in the New Covenant. Jesus wants him to take hold of the fact that *he does not have it*, and must be born again.

Everyone must be born again.... Good guys...bad guys..tall guys...short guys...everyone It doesn't matter what you have done...where you have been...who you think you are... You must be born again...Spiritually

Everyone in the world need a new Born Identity Studied and memorized the Bible...still must be born again Haven't missed church in 10 years..still must be born again Lead a Community Life Group...still must be born again Tithe 40% regularly...still must be born again.. Mass murderer...still must be born again Rapist.....still must be born again Fill in the blank...Jesus would still say...still must be born again

If you want to be in the Kingdom of God Nicodemus Person at Remnant...you must have two birthdays.. A physical one...and a spiritual one

John 3:7–8 (ESV) 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."

Jesus compares the Holy Spirit and rebirth like wind. We don't know where wind comes from but we know when it is blowing. Sometimes we feel God's presence like a soft breeze, other times like gail force winds, and sometimes we can't feel Him at all. Although we don't quite understand it, it illustrates the way one is born of the Spirit. I can't tell you exactly how the Spirit of God operates, but I can surely tell when He is moving in the lives and hearts of His people. That's exactly what our Lord is saying here.

At some point you just believe...and you know... But you may not know exactly when that moment happened? Jesus says..the Spirit of God is like that... You felt the impact of the wind...the movement of God But you don't know where it came from Or where it is going.. You just know if has been there.

John 3:9 (ESV) 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

Another great question in the Bible Note that this question reflects his heart...how can this be? Not...there is no way...Nicodemus is contemplating what it means that thousands of Jews, according to Jesus are not saved. The magnitude of what Jesus is saying is beginning to take form. Not only are Jews not saved, but Nicodemus realizes that neither is He. He is standing in front of the Word and the Word is calling Him to surrender.

Nicodemus realizes something critical here If God is doing something we don't understand... The problem is not that God is wrong... The problem is we don't understand it Spiritual things are supernatural..they are beyond explanation Our minds can't comprehend or explain the Spiritual things of God

1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV) 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

John 3:10–12 (ESV) 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

That's gentle satire that our Lord is using here. He is saying to this man, "You are a ruler in Israel and acting as if I were telling you something that couldn't be true, because if it were true, you would have known about it." And then Jesus asks, "Don't you know these things, Nicodemus?"

Nicodemus you want to understand Spiritual things But you don't even believe yet what I have made obvious to you In the physical world. So Jesus moves to a topic that He knows Nicodemus will understand. He takes the Old Testament scholar to a familiar moment in history. Moses leading the Israelites in the wilderness. Jesus tailors the discussion around something Nicodemus thought he understood.

John 3:14–17 (ESV) 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

OT story...Israelites complaining all the time to God God's judgment on them- poisonous snakes Many were dying....Moses was told by God to make a tall pole and put a bronze snake on it. God told them to look upon the pole and they would live. Those who trusted Him lived... Those who did not...died.

Serpents are often used as pictures of evil in the Bible. However, Moses' serpent in Numbers 21 was made of bronze, and bronze is a metal associated with judgment in the Bible, because bronze is with fire, a picture of judgment.

So, a *bronze* serpent does speak of sin, but of sin judged. In the same way Jesus, who knew no sin became sin for us on the cross, and our sin was judged in Him. A bronze serpent is a picture of sin judged and dealt with

the people were saved not by *doing* anything, but by simply *looking* to the bronze serpent. They had to trust that something as seemingly foolish as looking at such a thing would be sufficient to save them, and surely, some perished because they thought it too foolish to do such a thing

So Nicodemus...just like that...Jesus will one day be lifted up He will be lifted up on a pole...on a cross And those who trust in Him will live and survive God's punishment Those who don't trust Him will die.

As Moses lifted up the serpent, so Christ is going to be lifted up. That serpent, you see, represented the sin of the people. And Christ was made sin for us on the Cross because He bore our sin there. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

Then Jesus shifts from being born again...to having eternal life Who ever...anyone..who looks upon and trusts Jesus.... and what He did on the cross.... Will be born again...and have eternal life

Nicodemus is starting to figure this out So what you are saying Jesus...is that each person...must look at Jesus lifted up on the cross And then decide if they are going to trust Him to save them?

And if they look to you...and trust you...you are going to... Somehow give them a new birth...A spiritual birth And with that spiritual birth comes a new spiritual life A brand new kind of life that comes from above And that new Spiritual life will never end...it will be an eternal life Why God? Why would you do this?

John 3:16–17 (ESV) 16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

There are two things that we need to note here. One is that we *must* be born again. The other is that the Son of Man *must* be lifted up. They are related. It takes the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ—He must be lifted up. Since He has been lifted up, since He bore our penalty, the Spirit of God can regenerate us. And we *must* be born again—that is the only way God can receive us.

The motivation for all of this is that God so *loved* the world. God never saved the world by love, which is the mistaken thinking of today. It doesn’t say that God’s love saved the world, because the love of God could never save a sinner. God does not save by love, friends. *God saves by grace!*

Notice that with the word *believe* is the little preposition *in* which means to believe *in* Christ. That is, we trust Him as the One who bore the penalty for our sins. This is a personal thing. We must each believe that He died in our place and in our stead. You must believe that He died for you.

Why did I come? Why do I offer you this new life? Why am I here on a rescue mission Nicodemus? For God so loved... For God SO loved One person at a time... One decision at a time... One encounter at a time.... One new birth at a time....

God is love..Love covers a multitude of sins...You can't get there just with your mind...you experience it in your heart...God SO LOVED...Once you experience that...surrender is easily...Your list fades away and you find yourself in relationship with Him.

So like you and me...Nicodemus had a decision to make I believe He was born again....

John 19:39–40 (ESV) 39 Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. 40 So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

So every week...we come here to lift Jesus up....We elevate the Word of God, We worship the Word that became flesh...and we teach Him crucified and resurrected....Now very much alive and soon to return. We lift Him up so that the Spirit of God can reveal to us the Word of God. We do all that we can do to Lift Jesus up because....

John 12:31–32 (ESV)

32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Christ is lifted up....are you going to trust Him or ignore Him. Let's Pray