

24-0218a Transcript

24-0218a - Nicodemus, Part 1, Jim Lokenbauer

Bible Readers: John Nousek and Roger Raines

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Nicodemus, Part 1

Transcript (0:03 - 35:33)

Scripture Readings

1st Reader: John Nousek

John 3:1-3,

(0:03) Good morning. So this morning's first reading comes from the Gospel of John (0:10) chapter 3, the first three verses.

Then there was a man of the Pharisees named (0:17) Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, (0:25) Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do (0:36) unless God is with him. Jesus answered and said to him, most assuredly, I say to you, (0:47) unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (0:52)

2nd Reader: Roger Raines

John 3:6-10,

(0:57) Good morning. We will continue in the book of John chapter 3, verses 6 through 10. (1:05) John 3, 6 through 10.

That which is born of the flesh is the flesh and that which is born of the (1:16) spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows (1:23) where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it's coming from and where (1:29) is it going. So is everyone who is born of the spirit.

Nicodemus said to him, how could these (1:36) things be? Jesus answered and said to him, are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand (1:44) these things? This concludes this reading. (1:48)

Transcript

Preacher: Jim Lokenbauer

(1:53) Good morning. Bring the word of God to you. (1:57) And a lot of us have been watching the gospel drama called The Chosen, (2:05) and I highly recommend it. It is a well done production. One of my favorite characters (2:14) in that series is Nicodemus, also Matthew, they really do a good job on Matthew, (2:21) but I really was touched by the performance that Eric Avari gave portraying Nicodemus.

(2:31) I mean, it was genuinely a heartfelt tearjerker watching him as Nicodemus. (2:42) And he really nailed his role. And so today I want to do a study for you.

(2:51) This morning, I'll bring you half the lesson concluded this evening. But this is such a (2:58) vitally important conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. And we're going to go through this.

(3:10) I love going through studies verse by verse and talking about them. So if you would like, (3:17) please turn to John chapter three. We'll just roll right through this and then go verse by (3:34) verse.

And I thank the guys who read this this morning. Now, there was a man of the Pharisees (3:42) named Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, (3:48) Rabbi, we know you have come from God as a teacher for no one could do these signs that you do unless (3:56) God is with him.

Jesus answered and said to him, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born (4:04) again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter (4:15) a second time into his mother's womb to be born, can he? Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, (4:23) unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (4:31) That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

Do not (4:37) be amazed that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you (4:44) hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So is everyone (4:52) who is born of the spirit.

Nicodemus said to him, how can these things be? Jesus answered and said (5:00) to him, are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, (5:09) we speak what we know and testify of what we have seen and you do not accept our testimony. If I (5:17) told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (5:24) No one is ascended into heaven, but he who is descended from heaven, the son of man, (5:30) as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the son of man must be lifted up so that (5:40) whoever believes in him will have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only (5:48) begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

(5:54) For God did not send the son into the world to judge the world but that the world might be saved (6:01) through him. He who believes in him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already (6:08) because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.

This is the judgment (6:16) that the light has come into the world and men love the darkness rather than the light (6:23) for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the (6:31) light or fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices truth comes to the light (6:38) so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

And that ends that conversation. (6:48) So let's go through these together. Verse one.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, (7:00) a ruler of the Jews. Now Pharisees were the largest and strictest sect of the Jewish religious sects (7:10) and they devoted themselves to learning. They believed in the Holy Spirit, in the resurrection, (7:18) in heaven and angels.

As a ruler of the Jews, as he was called, he was also a member of the Sanhedrin (7:28) and that's the Jewish ruling council. It's their high court that rules their land. (7:35) And the origin of that court we can trace all the way back to Numbers chapter 11, (7:41) verse 16.

And the angel of the Lord sanctified 70 of the elders and leaders and gave them a portion (7:50) of the spirit that was upon Moses to help rule the people. And Nicodemus was one of these 70 (8:00) here in Jesus' time. And he was probably also a scribe since Jesus calls him a teacher (8:11) of the people or Israel's teacher.

So he was, along with Gamaliel, one of the premier teachers (8:20) of the law in Israel. This was a knowledgeable man, book-wise, and he was one that normally (8:31) received great respect from others. Let's look at verse two.

The same came to him by night and (8:39) said to him, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform (8:46) the miraculous signs you were doing if God were not with you. Now John doesn't tell us why he came (8:55) at night. Some suggest that he was fearful of his own sex, because many of the Pharisees wanted to (9:03) get rid of this troublemaker.

And so I don't know if that's necessarily true. But we know he wasn't (9:13) a coward, because later in the gospel, he defends Jesus before the Sanhedrin. They were looking for (9:23) ways to get rid of him.

They sent the guard out to arrest him. And Nicodemus stood up in front of (9:30) them all and said, do we judge a man before we've even heard what he had to say in front of us? So (9:40) he wasn't a coward. So I think that whole idea that him sneaking in and seeing Jesus at night (9:47) was so that he wouldn't get in trouble, I don't think that was it at all.

So most likely, in my (9:53) opinion, this is Jim's opinion, was that he wanted some one-on-one time with Jesus. What Jesus was (10:02) doing wasn't in the shadows, wasn't, you know, done in private. He was doing it publicly.

And (10:11) and I'm sure that Nicodemus may have even witnessed many of the miracles that he was doing. (10:24) I think he wanted to be away from the crowds, from the distraction, from all the clamor (10:32) that was going on. I think there was something burning inside Nicodemus so (10:39) hot that he had to see Jesus.

And he figured probably at night time, when everybody should (10:47) be in wind-down mode, would probably be the best time to get these burning questions answered. (11:00) There's another reason Nicodemus maybe wanted to keep an eye on Jesus. Jesus' miraculous birth, (11:12) an announcement, wasn't also done in secret.

Heavenly choir of angels announced it to the (11:22) shepherds. They came running in to see the new Savior, if you remember. And what does it say (11:30) there in Scripture? News spread about this through the whole countryside.

Nicodemus (11:38) was a teacher back then. Think also of this in Luke 2.40. It says, the boy grew up and became (11:50) strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him. So Jesus was an exceptional child (11:57) from the get-go.

And his excellence continued to grow. When Jesus was 12 years old, (12:07) at the end of the particular year, going back home, it was one of those festivals required (12:14) for all men to be in Jerusalem. So it was a traveling festival.

It was required. (12:22) Well, they were all heading back home and they usually traveled in big groups, (12:25) their families, and with neighbors, you know, those who lived around you, (12:31) safety in numbers. Well, everybody started going home and Mary and Joseph assumed Jesus was with (12:39) them.

But Luke tells us that at the end of the festival, he separated from his family and went (12:52) to the temple. And there, he spent the rest of his time there talking with who? The teachers of (13:02) the law. Do you think that maybe Nicodemus may have been one of those teachers of the law? (13:11) Listen to what Luke says.

Luke 2.45-50, we're told that Jesus' parents left for home and that (13:20) after a day's travel, notice Jesus wasn't with them. When they didn't find him, they returned to (13:29) Jerusalem to look for him. After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting amongst the (13:38) teachers and listening to them and asking them questions.

And all those who heard him were (13:46) astounded at his understanding and his answers. Jesus blew them away, this 12-year-old kid. (14:00) You think Nicodemus, being the teacher of Israel, heard Jesus way back then? (14:09) It would be hard to forget somebody like that.

So when he hears rumors that this Jesus of Nazareth (14:23) is now out preaching, gathering up disciples and performing miracles, do you think there was a (14:33) burning reason in his heart? I remember this kid, I gotta go for it, I gotta talk to him. (14:41) Does that make sense that that's why he went at night? You know, I really don't like the idea that (14:52) they considered him a prey of the members of his sect. I reject that.

I think Nicodemus himself (15:02) is an exemplary person. So when Jesus saw his parents, they were astonished. And his mother (15:08) said to him, son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously (15:14) searching for you.

Jesus answered, why were you searching for me? Didn't you know that it was (15:23) necessary for me to be in my father's house? But they did not understand what he said to them. (15:34) Jesus knew who he was even at 12. He knew he was the son of God.

And then he had to be in his (15:46) father's house. Did that house, the temple, belong to Joseph? We'll call him his stepdad. (15:56) No, Jesus knew who his real dad was.

I'm sure he loved Joseph very much. (16:03) But Jesus knew his true roots. After all, you don't think Mary told him about his miraculous birth? (16:13) So for four full days, and maybe even part of another day, (16:20) after the Passover festival, Jesus was in the temple engaged in deep theological (16:29) discussion with Israel's teachers.

They saw how special he was at an early age. (16:36) Jesus knew who he was. And it was necessary, God's words, it was necessary for him to be there.

(16:48) Jesus was getting his training. And he probably got some of that training from Nicodemus himself. (17:01) So notice also the respect this pious man, Nicodemus, gives to Jesus.

He addressed him as (17:13) rabbi. And that is the title of honor given to Israel's teachers. So here's Israel's teacher, (17:23) Nicodemus, who was a rabbi, actually a rabboni, a very exalted teacher, (17:31) giving Jesus respect and accolades.

If he would have been like any of the other (17:40) Pharisees who spit their disdain at Jesus, hissed at him, looking down their noses at him, (17:49) they wouldn't have addressed him as rabbi. Nicodemus does. So being a Pharisee, he knew (17:57) the signs of the times.

And he was one of the many who were waiting for the Messiah to come back (18:06) to rescue Israel, and in their opinion, rescue them from Rome. They often had a misperception (18:18) of what the Messiah would be like. Let's look at verse 3. Jesus answered him, (18:24) Most certainly, I tell you, many versions have, verily, verily, many versions have, (18:30) truly, truly.

Most certainly, I tell you, unless one is born again, he can't see the kingdom of God. (18:41) So most certainly, or verily, verily, or amen, is a strong affirmation. It means what I'm saying to (18:52) you is absolute truth.

So when a man says amen, it means may it be so. When God says amen, it means (19:05) it shall be done. You can count on it.

So Jesus, as a prophet, has the ability to see into everyone's (19:17) hearts, and he knows their thoughts, and he saw that Nicodemus needed to know about the kingdom (19:26) of God before he even asked the question. And so he gets to the matter at hand quickly. (19:36) You have to be born again to enter the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus would have been familiar with (19:44) this term, but he didn't make a connection. When Gentiles became proselytes, or converted (19:52) to Judaism, they were ceremonially washed with a baptism, believe it or not. This even predates (20:04) John's baptism in the river, Jordan.

And then when the Jews let the Gentiles into their fold, (20:18) they said of them that they were like born again. That's their terms. It's not new to Christianity.

(20:30) Converts were considered born again, and that they were newborn in their faith. (20:39) The proselytes, those converting to the Jewish faith, had to have a change of heart within them, (20:45) and they were circumcised outwardly in the flesh to bring them into God's covenant, (20:53) what we call the Old Testament. And so to enter the kingdom of God, his church that was soon to (21:02) come, we all need a new form of birth, a spiritual one, and this is what Jesus is going to be (21:11) talking about.

Verse 4, Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? (21:17) Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born? So Nicodemus is still thinking carnally, (21:27) worldly, and not spiritually. He can't grasp the spiritual aspect of what Christ is saying. (21:35) Verse 5, Jesus answered, most certainly I tell you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, (21:43) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Here Jesus emphatically states that you can't enter (21:52) his kingdom, his church, unless you were born of water and the spirit. That would be baptism, (22:05) where by faith we follow his command and we die with Christ by being buried with him in the (22:12) likeness of his death in water. And there is where his blood atones us for our sins, and there (22:23) Christ himself circumcises our hearts, not outwardly circumcising us, but he circumcises (22:34) our hearts.

That's why scripture can say that the old man is removed (22:44) our old sinful nature and nailed to his cross. And that's why when we're lifted up out of the (22:54) baptismal waters, we are born again. We are anew, clean, sinless, sanctified, holy, now set apart (23:11) to do good deeds for God to give him glory.

We also see this in the second chapter of Acts, (23:20) when the people hear Peter's first gospel message, public message, and they are cut to their heart (23:30) by Peter's words, and they are convicted by the Holy Spirit of their sin, and they respond (23:39) in unison by saying, brothers what shall we do when the weight of the fact that they were (23:50) guilty of putting the Savior, God's anointed, the Messiah, the Christ on the cross, you did it, (24:01) Peter said, brothers what shall we do? Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of (24:12) Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (24:23) We saw that just the other day. I had the honor of baptizing Stephen.

He's a new creature. He (24:34) has all his sins removed. He has Holy Spirit.

He is one of them. He is a Christian. Praise God.

(24:45) What a great young lad. There were plenty of young kids here that day too, and it takes a lot (24:52) for a young one to get up in front of their peers and say, I'm a sinner, I need to be baptized. (24:59) He didn't let any of that stop him.

Good job. So in John 1, 12-13, it also says, (25:08) but as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, (25:15) even to those who believe in his name, who were born not of blood, (25:18) nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but born of God. (25:26) So we need this new birth, not a common birth as stated here, not a normal birth as when a child (25:37) is born by his mother into the world.

We need a special new birth, a spiritual birth, and it (25:45) involves water. It involves obedience. And most of all, it involves faith in the Savior and doing (25:56) what he says.

2 Corinthians 5-17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. (26:04) The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

So you're a new creation (26:12) when you've been born again. Galatians 6-15, for in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision anything (26:22) nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. God is looking for that changed human heart, (26:33) that believing, obedient heart who becomes a new creation.

Nicodemus (26:38) should have made the connection between the baptism of the proselytes, (26:45) I'm calling them born again, and what Jesus was saying about being born again (26:51) to enter his kingdom. Being the teacher of Israel, he should have recognized it and made (26:58) the connection, connecting the dots. That's what it's all about, to understand the New Testament.

(27:06) You got to know the Old Testament and what they did. And when you make those dots, it all starts (27:12) making sense. Verse 6, flesh is flesh.

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. And Jesus is (27:24) making a distinction between the two conditions of birth, natural birth and spiritual birth. (27:32) And just as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15, 34-56, I will not read that, (27:39) concerning the resurrection, this earthly body can't go to heaven in its fleshly, carnal state.

(27:50) It has to go through a transformation, just like our soul has to go through a transformation (27:57) when we become born again in order to receive our heavenly bodies. It needs to be transformed (28:09) into the imperishable body, the spiritual body, the one made for heaven. And so it is in a similar (28:18) way we gain entrance into the kingdom of God.

It's a condition that has to be met. You can't be (28:26) sinful and worldly. You need to be purified with a spiritual birth.

You can be in where (28:37) the saints are gathered and be with them, but to actually be owned by a new master, Jesus, (28:49) you need to go through this spiritual birth. It's like we can have visitors who might come in off (28:56) the street who don't know about this new birth, and they can be amongst us. We teach them, (29:06) we tell them about the new birth so they can be a part of Christ's kingdom, a part of his church.

(29:14) Paul tells us we need to be transformed in our minds to be spiritual in Romans 12, 2, (29:23) 3. Being led by the Spirit. That's him. (29:30) Could you please mute your phones, those who are listening in? Because what you're saying, (29:36) everybody can hear.

So Jesus is saying that those who are earthborn will remain earthly, (29:44) whereas if we're born of the Spirit, we will transform into Christ's image, and one day (29:51) we'll inherit spiritual heaven. Don't marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. (30:00) In a word, Nicodemus was flabbergasted.

This was a whole new teaching, and one that he had a hard (30:08) time grasping. He knew the old law, but failed to connect those dots. Verse 8. The wind blows (30:19) where it wants to, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from, (30:24) and where it is going.

So is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. (30:30) So the same Greek word, pneuma, which means wind, breath, and spirit, (30:36) and just like natural wind, you can't see it, but you can tell its effects. You can't be sure (30:45) when or where or how the wind does what it does.

So it is with Holy Spirit. He's showing his (30:52) influential powers where and when and on whom he sees fit. He sees the heart and knows those hearts (31:04) that are going to be ready to accept the message, and Scripture says that God draws men to him, (31:13) and this is part of that mechanism that makes this work, that people get drawn by the word, (31:22) the Spirit working on the heart.

Verse 9 and 10. Nicodemus answered him, how can these things be? (31:35) Jesus answered him, are you the teacher of Israel and don't understand these things? (31:43) Even though Nicodemus was trying to understand, he couldn't. Most people under the law of Moses, (31:53) teachers and leaders included, didn't understand what they were teaching.

They didn't understand (32:01) what they were really doing. They did things mechanically, out of rote, out of habit, (32:09) without trying to understand the deeper spiritual meaning of what they were doing. (32:16) It was there for them to figure out, but as we can see, he didn't grasp it.

Many didn't even (32:25) understand that there was a spiritual aspect to the old law. Paul, while he was in his first (32:32) missionary journey, went into the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, and there he preached to his (32:40) brothers and said in Acts 13 27, for those who dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they (32:47) did not know him, or even the voices of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them (32:54) condemning him. So Paul was saying that the rulers didn't recognize any of that.

Excuse me, (33:13) old man runny nose. Talk too much and it starts running. Okay, sorry.

So even though they read (33:21) the scriptures every Sabbath, they didn't get it. What they read, if they had understood, (33:30) they would have recognized the Messiah and not have crucified him. So Nicodemus was like those (33:38) in that group, ignorant of scripture.

Being a teacher of the law, he should have made those (33:44) connections, especially what we see as being painfully obvious scriptures from Ezekiel and (33:55) Jeremiah, talking about this time, talking about the new condition of man that was coming, (34:03) and that God would give them his spirit for Nicodemus. His head was spinning (34:15) with this discussion about the work of the Holy Spirit. I doubt that there were any deep (34:23) discussions on that particular subject, even among the Pharisees who believed that there was (34:29) the Holy Spirit.

Their counterparts, the Sadducees, flat out rejected anything spiritual. (34:37) They didn't even believe in heaven. I'm surprised they even believed in God, (34:43) like they were just going along for the ride.

They were more politician than believer. (34:51) We're going to explore these scriptures that Nicodemus should have really recognized what Jesus (34:57) was talking about this evening. That would have clued him in on what Jesus was telling him about (35:03) the Spirit.

And then we'll conclude this evening, this discussion that Nicodemus has with the (35:10) Savior of Israel, with the Savior of the world. So at this time I'm going to offer the invitation, (35:17) if anybody has any need, come forward, make it known. We'll pray for you and help you out.

(35:28) Be back tonight for the conclusion. Thank you.