

The Four Gospels of the Bible, Visit by Nicodemus in Jerusalem

John 3:1-21

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. (NIV)

*There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, “Rabbi, **we all know you’re a teacher straight from God.** No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren’t in on it.”*

*Jesus said, “You’re absolutely right. Take it from me: **Unless a person is born from above,** it’s not possible to see what I’m pointing to—to God’s kingdom.”*

“How can anyone,” said Nicodemus, “be born who has already been born and grown up? You can’t re-enter your mother’s womb and be born again. What are you saying with this ‘born-from-above’ talk?”

*Jesus said, “You’re not listening. Let me say it again. **Unless a person submits to this original creation—the ‘wind hovering over the water’ creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom.** When you look at a baby, it’s just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can’t see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit.*

“So don’t be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be ‘born from above’—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it’s headed next. That’s the way it is with everyone ‘born from above’ by the wind of God, the Spirit of God.”

Nicodemus asked, “What do you mean by this? How does this happen?”

Jesus said, “You’re a respected teacher of Israel and you don’t know these basics? Listen carefully. I’m speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don’t believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can’t see, the things of God?

“No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

*“This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. **Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it.***

H. Kirk Rainer

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And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

*"This is the crisis we're in: God-light streamed into the world, **but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God.** Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is."*

(The Message)

Reading...and more Reading

I purposely include all twenty-one verses because this is a story where every detail is integral and important. Nicodemus (we'll call him "Nick") is an important civic leader – but he is also a confessed believer that Jesus is a true teacher of God. His arrival in the dark is not by accident – as his powerful position creates at the potential for some conflict in consorting with Christ.

In Darkness

The Pharisees are not on good terms with Jesus – which is why Nick arrives in darkness. He does not want anyone to know of his conversation, but he wants to know the true nature of Christ. His inquiry is genuine; or in other words, he does not have an ulterior motive.

Born Again – A New Life

Nick is an intelligent and learned man; yet when Jesus replies with the concept of being born again, **Nick does not get it!** Believing the literal meaning of being born, Nick is confused; but Jesus patiently continues with some reassurance that his words are the truth. He not only explains but Christ also describes the basis for why people are not able to understand the truth. These people "ran for the darkness" – or a place with there is no light, no truth...

Trust in Him, in the truth

So ends the meeting that began in darkness: Nick is enlightened or sees the light; now he knows the truth – that Christ is the Son of God and, to trust in Him, is to be born again or begin a new life. This new life is not in the physical sense of course; but is about a transformation of the heart – the dying of the "old man" and the growth of the new child of God. The *Nick at night* became the Nick of Light...

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