

**The Word Became Flesh  
(Week 6)  
John 2:23-3:16  
“The Original Nick at Night”**

**Introduction**

**While He was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many believed in His Name when they saw the signs He was doing. Jesus, however, would not entrust Himself to them, since He knew them all and because He did not need anyone to testify about man; for He Himself knew what was in a man. There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus...**  
**John 2:23-3:1a**

The break between **John Chapters 2 and 3** is unfortunate, for the last thoughts of **Chapter 2** actually lead into the story of Nicodemus. Jesus could tell if someone was sincere or not, he needed no one else's opinion on the subject, for He can see directly into the heart of every human being. He knows what is true and what is false. Many believed that He was very special because of the miracles that He performed, much the same as many today are enthralled with their favorite movie star or entertainer, but it doesn't last. This kind of devotion is both superficial and fleeting. When people grow tired of the hype, then they are on to the next emotional high. Jesus knew full well that some of the very people who were flattering Him then would later be the same who would cry "crucify Him" in the end. It was just a simple matter of time.

Then, the scriptures say, there was a man named Nicodemus. He was different somehow. A devout Pharisee and observer of The Law of Moses, Nicodemus had a genuine heart for God. He had tried to live out what he believed, although he did not completely comprehend that no man can ever live up to God's standards. In Jesus, Nicodemus saw something divine. And He wanted to find out more.

Nicodemus was more than just a Pharisee. *The Bible* tells us that he was a "ruler of the Jews". This meant that he was a sitting member of Israel's "supreme court", known as The Sanhedrin. And as such, he should have understood much better the spiritual things of which Jesus spoke. But, like many who are ultra religious, Nicodemus was very much in the dark, when it came to the things of The Spirit. The fact that he came to Jesus "at night" was symbolic of the spiritual darkness that he was in. Perhaps he had waited until night so that he might be able to speak more privately with Jesus.

There could be any number of reasons that he waited until night fall. I personally think it was because he was ashamed to admit that even though he was supposed to be a spiritual leader in Israel, he still felt that he was lacking in some regard. Perhaps he did not want others to see him asking the questions that he was perceived to already have the answers for. It is difficult for a leader to admit that they don't know something. Especially when they are supposed to know it! We may never know why he waited until dark for this meeting, but we should be thankful that it took place. For out of it came one of the most beloved passages in all of Scripture.

As we read the story of Nicodemus, we can feel ourselves inwardly cheering this man on. His humility and willingness to ask the questions that all of us would want to ask ourselves is compelling to us on the deepest level. We want to see this man "get it". We want to see him find the salvation that he is so longing for, even if he doesn't completely understand his need of it. We are rallying behind Nicodemus in this passage, because, in him, we see ourselves. We want him to find in Christ what we have in Him. We want Him to understand what it means to be "born again."

Let us look together at this wonderful passage and see how loving and patient The Savior was with Nicodemus that fateful night in the darkness. Jesus used three separate illustrations to show this troubled Pharisee what was lacking within him. The word picture that Christ vividly paints for him is both wondrous and deep. It speaks of *The Birth*, *The Breeze*, and *The Brazen Serpent*.

**The (New) Birth (vs.2-7)**

**This man came to Him at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher Who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him.”**

**Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

**“How can anyone be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked Him, “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?”**

**Jesus answered, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and The Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of The Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again.”** **John 3:2-7**

It is important to see here that Nicodemus, unlike many of his counterparts in the Sanhedrin, recognized Jesus’ authority as being from God. He refers to Jesus as “Rabbi”, meaning religious teacher. Even though Jesus never attended the formal school of the Pharisees, Nicodemus can see that He has been taught by God Himself. He addressed Jesus almost as a peer, by calling Him “Rabbi”. What he does not realize is that Jesus is much more than a teacher, He is The Son of The Most High God. And as such, He is certainly not Nicodemus’ fellow leader and teacher of The Word, He is The Word made flesh.

Jesus doesn’t accept Nicodemus’ description or flattery of Him, but rather, He gets right to the heart of this Pharisee’s problem. For you see, until you see Jesus for Who He truly is, you are still in the darkness and lost in your sins.

**...“Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** **vs.3**

Jesus likens salvation to new birth or being born from above. Nicodemus failed to see the spiritual side of the conversation. The Jews believe that life begins when a person takes their first breath. When we are born, the first thing that we do is breathe. At this point, according to Jewish reasoning, our brand new life begins. And consequently, life ends, when we let out our last breath. It is important for us to understand that the Biblical word for “*spirit*” both in the Hebrew and the Greek means *breath or wind*.

Let us go all the way back to the Garden of Eden for a moment. When Adam was created, *The Bible* tells us that God actually **“breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7)**. Why is this so important? Because in order to have life, we must have breath. When we are born physically or “of water” as Jesus says is, we take the breath of life into our lungs, and we are alive. In the same way, when we are “born again” for above, we take in The Holy Spirit, and we are given spiritual life in Christ. Two births; one is natural, and the other is spiritual. This is the truth that Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand.

Nicodemus was well aware of physical birth, but was very much in the dark about spiritual rebirth. He asked Jesus how it was possible for a man to be born again? Could he return to his mother’s womb and experience a new birth? I for one am thankful that people like Nicodemus, and the disciple Thomas are featured in scripture! They ask the questions that we are often too afraid to ask. Nicodemus didn’t get it, and he told Jesus as much. He wanted to understand, but he didn’t know the answers. So he did what a wise person would do, he asked Jesus to help him understand. I am reminded of the man in Mark’s gospel, who came to Jesus asking Him to heal his sick child. Jesus told him that all things were possible to those who believe (**Mark 9:23**). The man’s reply says it all:

**...LORD, I do believe; help my unbelief!**

**Mark 9:24b**

Nicodemus wanted to believe what Jesus was telling him, he just simply couldn’t put it all together quite yet. So he asked Jesus for an explanation. And that is when he got a second illustration.

**The Breeze (Wind) (vs. 8-13)**

***“The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of The Spirit.”***

***“How can these things be?” asked Nicodemus.***

***“Are you a teacher of Israel and don’t understand these things?” Jesus replied. “Truly I tell you, we speak what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you do not accept our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you don’t believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the One Who descended from heaven — The Son of Man.”***  
**John 3:8-13**

Jesus once more encourages Nicodemus to take his eyes off the physical and look to the spiritual. He does this by using the example of the wind. You cannot see the wind, but you can see its effects. You can feel it, when it blows over you. You can hear it when it comes. The only things that you cannot do with the wind is see it with your eyes or know where it comes from. To be born again from above is to trust in that which you cannot see, and you will in fact feel the effects as a result.

Those who have believed in Christ and experience new birth from above can’t fully explain it, but they know that they are changed. The “wind” of The Spirit has breathed new life into them, and they are never the same. No longer do we try and follow God’s Law so that He will accept us. We have been accepted in Christ. We now obey, because our very nature has been changed, and we desire, from within, the holiness that is the very nature of our Father. And THAT is what it means to be “born again”. It is the difference between religion and a relationship with our heavenly Father.

Nicodemus was still struggling with this reality, but Jesus doesn’t give up on Him. No one comes to Jesus unless The Father draws him (**John 6:44**), and it is quite obvious that God has led this man to Jesus. So we are cheering him on. We want him to understand, believe, and be changed. And Jesus wants this as well. So He keeps explaining the spiritual to a man who only sees the physical. Nicodemus was a teacher of God’s Word, and he should have understood the spiritual truths that Jesus was explaining, but there is a big difference between being religious and being filled with The Spirit of The Living God.

Jesus reminds Nicodemus that no one has ever seen God. But Nicodemus obviously believes in God. Now all that he needs to do is believe in the One Who has been sent by God. Nicodemus needs to come out of the darkness and into the light. He needs to recognize Who it is that is speaking to Him. He needs what Paul speaks of in his letter to the Colossians.

***He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of The Son He loves. In Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.***  
**Colossians 1:13-15**

If you want to see the invisible God, all that you need to do is look to Jesus. Look to Jesus and have new life!

**The Brazen serpent (vs. 14-16)**

***Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.***  
**John 3:14-16**

Jesus finally uses an illustration that this *Old Testament* scholar should have been able to understand. He reminds Nicodemus of an event recorded in the book of Numbers. The children of Israel had complained and murmured against God in the wilderness. In short, they had rebelled against the God Who loved and provided for them. So, God sent poisonous snakes among the people, so that many Israelites died (***Numbers 21:6***). The people then cried out to Moses to seek The LORD'S mercy. God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it up on a pole. Those who had been bitten could look up at the serpent by faith and live. God actually used this event to foreshadow His Son's death upon the cross.

Jesus explained to Nicodemus, that in the same manner that those who had looked up at that serpent hanging on the pole had lived, those who would look to Jesus and His atoning death upon the cross would be given everlasting life. For you see, our sins, represented by the snake on that pole, were placed upon Christ on Calvary's cross. He Who knew no sin, became sin for us (***2 Corinthians 5:21***). Jesus took the filthiness of our sin, that we wore about ourselves as a detestable garment, and put them upon Himself, and then clothed us in His very own righteousness. We are born again and healed, when we look to the cross of Calvary by faith. Of course Nicodemus did not get the reference at first, because Jesus had not yet been nailed to a cross to take our sins upon Himself. But we know by reading this gospel that he did in fact eventually come to understanding and faith (***John 7:50: 19:39***).

And so, thanks to the inquisitiveness of Nicodemus, this Pharisee who came to Jesus in his own spiritual darkness, we have been given the most wonderful verse of Scripture to explain the finished work of Christ:

***For God so loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that EVERYONE who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.*** ***John 3:16***  
(emphasis added)

Two times in this passage we hear The LORD say, "truly". The actual word He uses in the original text is "Amen", meaning "truth" or "so it is". And just what is this "truth"? That in order to enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again from above. You must be filled with the breath of The Spirit in order to breathe in life everlasting. This is the truth, the great "amen" as it were, of Scripture. There is no other way to God.

***For you are saved by grace through faith, and this not of yourselves; It is God's gift — not from words, so that no one can boast.*** ***Ephesians 2:8-9***

***"For God so loved, that He GAVE....."*** In ***John 3:16*** lies the greatest gift the world has ever known. And sadly, many will never see or receive it for themselves. In order to have eternal life one must not only be born of water (natural birth), but born from above by The Spirit of God. You must experience both the breath of life and the "breath" of The Spirit of The Living God. And this new birth and new life can only come by looking to Jesus. To be enlightened from above to recognize that He is no mere "teacher" or "good moral example". He is The Son of God. He knows all spiritual reality, because He came down from heaven. In Him, we live and move and have our being. Jesus is the source of both physical and spiritual life. So when He says, ***"You must be born again"***, then rest assured... He knows that you must.

So look to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith (***Hebrews 12:2***). He was lifted up on a cross so that whosoever would believe in Him, would not perish, but would be given everlasting life. When we see Him for Who He is, and then place our faith in His Name, we are reborn... not from below, but from above. And His Spirit comes to live within us. So look to Jesus. By faith, believe in Him. Look to Jesus... and LIVE!

Any let all who have truly seen Him and have believed, say... TRUTH!!