

Encountering Religion – Nicodemus

Devoutly Religious

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

A Curious Leader

² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

A Perplexing Response

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

Every sin is an act of cosmic treason, a futile attempt to dethrone God in His sovereign authority. R.C. Sproul

Confusion Ensued

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Born Again

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

² The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.

³ All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Psalm 14

If I was saved by my good works then there would be a limit to what God could ask of me or put me through. I would be alike a taxpayer with ‘rights’ – I would have done my duty and now I would deserve a certain quality of life. But if I am a sinner saved by sheer grace – then there’s nothing He cannot ask of me. Woman in a conversation with her Pastor

Baffled

⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

God needed a way of destroying evil without destroying us. Tim Keller

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3

⁴⁰ On hearing his words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet.”

⁴¹ Others said, “He is the Messiah.”

Still others asked, “How can the Messiah come from Galilee? ⁴² Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” ⁴³ Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

⁴⁵ Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”

⁴⁶ “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied.

⁴⁷ “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. ⁴⁸ “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹ No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.”

⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, ⁵¹ “Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?”

⁵² They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.” John 7

³⁸ Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. ³⁹ He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.¹ ⁴⁰ Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹ At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴² Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. John 19

Jesus Christ came to pay the penalty for our sins. That was an infinite sentence, but He must have satisfied it fully, because on Easter Sunday He walked out free. The resurrection was God’s way of stamping PAID IN FULL right across history so that nobody could miss it. On the Day of the Lord—the day that God makes everything right, the day that everything sad comes untrue—on that day the same thing will happen to your own hurts and sadness. You will find that the worst things that have ever happened to you will in the end only enhance your eternal delight. On that day, all of it will be turned inside out and you will know joy beyond the walls of the world. The joy of your glory will be that much greater for every scar you bear. So live in the light of the resurrection and renewal of this world, and of yourself, in a glorious, never-ending, joyful dance of grace. Tim Keller