

Touched by Jesus- Nicodemus

Today, we continue our study of people who were touched and changed by an encounter with the incarnate God- Jesus....Jesus didn't just speak to large crowds or impersonally wave His hand over groups of people that He healed or cast out demons. Jesus took the time on many occasions to minister to, listen to, discuss, instruct, heal, deliver and lead to salvation people on a one on one basis. Nicodemus was one such person. Nicodemus came to Jesus, one on one, with some serious, sincere kingdom oriented questions and Jesus took the time, one on one, to answer those questions. Nicodemus would never be the same.

The fact is, anyone and everyone who truly ever has an encounter with Jesus was, and is, drastically changed.

As we will read, Nicodemus was a Pharisee. For Nicodemus to have become a follower of Jesus Christ in his day, would not be to far from being like a Muslim cleric today turning to Christianity.

Read John 3:1-21 (HCSB)

1 There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. John 3:1 (HCSB)

Nicodemus was a Pharisee.

Pharisees- Separatists (Heb. persahin, from parash, "to separate"). The first mention of them is in a description by Josephus of the three sects or schools into which the Jews were divided (B.C. 145). The other two sects were the Essenes and the Sadducees. In the time of our Lord they were the popular party. They were extremely accurate and minute in all matters appertaining to the law of Moses. Paul, when brought before the council of Jerusalem, professed himself a Pharisee.

There was much that was sound in their creed, yet their system of religion was a form and nothing more. Theirs was a very lax morality. On the first notice of them in the New Testament, they are ranked by our Lord with the Sadducees as a "generation of vipers." They were noted for their self-righteousness and their pride. They were frequently rebuked by our Lord.

From the very beginning of his ministry the Pharisees showed themselves bitter and persistent enemies of our Lord. They could not bear his doctrines, and they sought by every means to destroy his influence among the people. —*Easton's Illustrated Dictionary*

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, but it doesn't seem he was a typical one. My guess is that he was probably more righteous and devout than the typical Pharisee and looking, like Simeon, for "Israel's consolation." Most of the Pharisees very early in Jesus ministry began to despise Him and set out often to trick Him into embarrassing or contradicting Himself. Ultimately, they were principle players in the arrest, abuse, and crucifixion of Jesus.

2 This man came to Him at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him." John 3:-2 (HCSB)

This one Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Why? Was his pharasytical schedule too booked to seek out Jesus in the day time? Was he on his way to pick up some milk at the market and just ran into Jesus? Or, did Nicodemus seek out Jesus at night because he was trying to avoid being seen by his peers? Was he seeking answers for others as well as himself? "We know you have come from God."

Rabbi- My master, a title of dignity given by the Jews to their doctors of the law and their distinguished teachers—*Easton's Illustrated Dictionary*

Nicodemus attitude off the bat was different from most of the rest of Pharisees. He acknowledged that Jesus was from God. Nicodemus obviously already knew about Jesus; His teaching, His healing, casting out demons. He surmised correctly that no one could "do these signs unless God were with him." He must have willingly or maybe originally been assigned to follow Jesus around. He might have even been instructed to try to trap Him in His words. But no one ever spoke like this. His obvious prior encounters with Jesus led to his seeking the Lord out at night. He wanted to know more. I would guess that faith was welling already up in him.

3 Jesus replied, "**I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" **4** "But 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?" **5** Jesus answered, "**I assure you: Unless**

someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. John 3:3-7 (HCSB)

It doesn't seem that Nicodemus was initially seeking the way to eternal life, but that's what he got. If you want to see, or even understand, the kingdom of God you must be born again.

Nick didn't understand so Jesus spelled it out for him more clearly. You must be born of the Spirit. Being born again is not just an option for drawing closer to God or earning spiritual brownie points. It is the way, the only way, to salvation, eternal life and heaven.

Though I believe Nicodemus came to Jesus sincerely seeking answers, he wasn't too quick to pick up on the figurative language that Jesus used. He was obviously puzzled, so Jesus went on, in much greater detail, to explain exactly what He meant. And here in these next few verses, we have what is probably the most clear, concise and profound presentation of the gospel in all of scripture and it came from our Lord's own mouth.

8 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 born of the Spirit.” **9** “How can these things be?” asked Nicodemus. **10** “Are you a teacher of Israel and don't know these things?” Jesus replied. **11** “I assure you: We speak what We know and We testify to what We have seen, but you do not accept Our testimony. **12** If I have told you about things that happen on earth and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about things of heaven? **13** No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended 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** so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. **16** “For God 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. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. **18** Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God. **19** “This, then, is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. **20** For everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. **21** But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.” John 3:1-21 (HCSB)

Nicodemus came to Jesus wanting to know who He was. Jesus, with profound clarity, revealed to Nicodemus that He:

*Had testified of earthly and heavenly truth

*knew about things of heaven

*had descended from and ascended to heaven

*Would “be lifted up” (die) so that everyone who believes will have eternal life.

*Was the Son of God.

*Was the way of salvation.

*Belief in Him is necessary for salvation

*Light and truth

I believe Nicodemus found out what He was looking for in profound detail and with perfect clarity. ... Wouldn't you like to have been the one, in a personal, one on one meeting with Jesus Himself, for the very first time in all human history, to hear the words of the most beloved, remembered, oft quoted verse in all the bible? And it's not just beautiful, figurative and poetic. It is the gospel unto salvation! Nicodemus heard it from the lips of God the Son. Did Nicodemus drop to his knees and get saved right on the spot? The scripture does not tell us, but I believe he either did right then or very soon after. Is this just wishful thinking or is there any solid evidence that he did become a follower of Christ?

Clue #1- (few months or maybe a year or so later)

45 Then the temple police came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why haven't you brought Him?” **46** The police answered, “No man ever spoke like this!” **47** Then the Pharisees responded to them: “Are you fooled too? **48** Have any of the rulers believed in Him? Or any of the Pharisees? **49** But this crowd, which doesn't know the law, is accursed!” **50** Nicodemus—the one who came to Him previously, being one of them—said to them, **51** “Our law doesn't judge a man before it hears from him and knows what he's doing, does it?” **52** “You aren't from Galilee too, are you?” they replied. “Investigate and you will see that no prophet arises from Galilee.” [**53** So each one went to his house. John 7:45-53 (HCSB)

It was at great risk of his position of authority and respect among the Jewish leaders that Nicodemus defended Jesus.

Clue #2 After the crucifixion

38 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus—but secretly because of his fear of the Jews—asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus’ body. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took His body away. **39** Nicodemus (who had previously come to Him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes. **40** Then they took Jesus’ body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the aromatic spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews. **41** There was a garden in the place where He was crucified. A new tomb was in the garden; no one had yet been placed in it. **42** They place Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation and since the tomb was nearby. John 19:38-42 (HCSB)

It was even at much greater risk of not only authority and position but even possibly of his life that he brought the burial spices and participated in the burial of Jesus. Nicodemus was touched and changed by Jesus. What about you?

[Touched by Jesus:](#)

Seek Him Jesus had already had an impact on Nick. Jesus touched him before he came to Jesus that night, but he made the decision to seek out Jesus.... Jesus has been seeking you and speaking to you. You must respond though at some point and begin to respond and seek Him in repentance and faith if you want to be changed.

Believe in Him The belief required for receiving eternal life goes way beyond head knowledge of the historical man Jesus. “The demons also believe—and they shudder.” James 2:19 (HCSB)

It is believing all that He and His followers claimed who He was according to the scripture. That He truly is God, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified as an atoning sacrifice for your sins, and that He rose again.

You must be born again There is no other way, no other plan, no other person. Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once.

You must complete the process of seeking and believing- be born again.

Defend Him If you have truly been born again, you will defend Jesus and testify of Him as Nick did. Your public and private life will be consistent with one who is a true follower of Christ.

26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. James 2:26 (HCSB)

Follow Jesus example and use every day conversations with people to confront them with the gospel.